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111

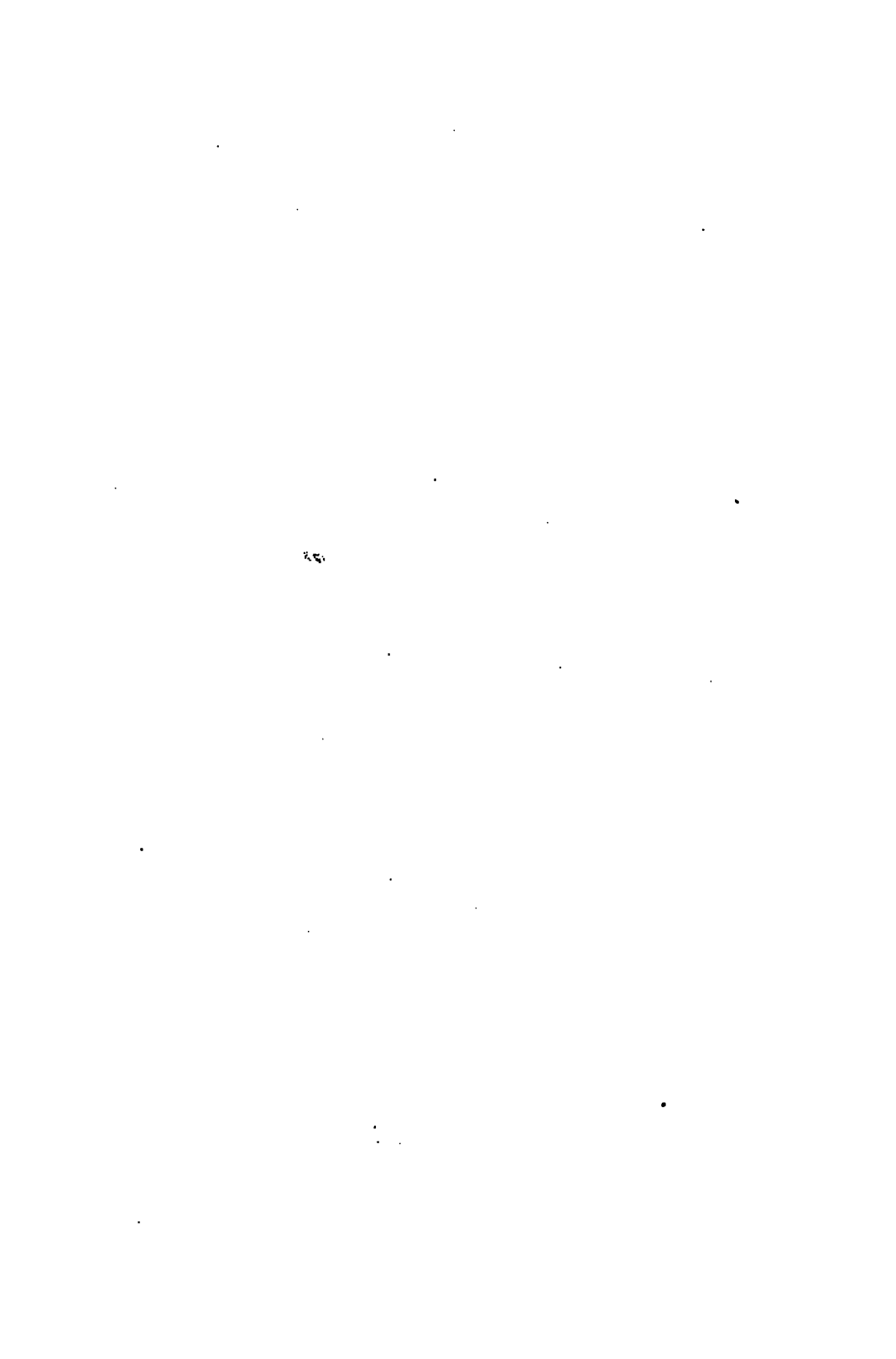
112

113

114

115

116



BEAUCHAMP:

OR,

THE ERROR.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

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"THE SMUGGLER," "DARNLEY," "RICHELIEU,"

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BEAUCHAMP:

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CHAPTER I.

It was in the reign of one of the Georges—it does not matter which, though perhaps the reader may discover in the course of this history. After all, what does it signify in what king's reign an event happened? for although there may be something in giving to any particular story "a local habitation and a name," yet there is nothing, strange to say, which gives man—I speak from my own experience—a more vivid perception of the delusiveness of everything on earth, than the study of, and

deep acquaintance with the annals of a many-lined monarchy. To see how these spoilt children of fortune have fought and struggled, coveted and endeavoured, obtained or have been disappointed, hoped, feared, joyed, and passed away—ay, passed, so that the monumental stone, and a few historic lines from friend and foe, as dry as doubtful, are all that remains of them—it gives us a sensation that all on earth is a delusion, that history is but the pages of a dream-book, the truest chronicle, but a record of unreal pageants that are gone.

However that may be, it was in the reign of one of the Georges—I wont be particular as to the date, for Heaven knows I am likely to be mistaken in the curl of a wig, or the fashion of a sleeve-button, and then what would the antiquaries say?

It was in the reign of one of the Georges—thank Heaven, there were four of them, in long and even succession, so that I may do anything I like with the coats, waistcoats, and breeches, and have a vast range through a wilderness of petticoats, (hooped and unhooped, tight, loose,

long, short, flowing, tucked up,) to say nothing of flounces and furbelows, besides head-dresses, in endless variety, patches, powder, and pomatum, fans, gloves, and high-heeled shoes. Heaven and earth, what a scope!—but I am determined to write this work just as it suits me. I have written enough to suit the public, and I am very happy to find that I have suited them; but in this, I hope and trust, both to please my public and myself, too. Thus I wish to secure myself a clear field, and therefore to declare, in the first instance, that I will stand upon no unities of time or place, but will indulge in all the vagaries that I please, will wander hither and thither at my own discretion, will dwell upon those points that please myself, as long as I can find pleasure therein, and will leap over every unsafe or disagreeable place with the bound of a kangaroo. That being settled, and perfectly agreed upon between the reader and myself, we will go on if you please.

It was in the reign of one of the Georges—I have a great mind to dart away again, but I

wont, for it is well to be compassionate—when a gentleman of six or seven-and-twenty years of age, rode along a pleasant country road somewhere in the west of England. It was eventide, when the sun, tired with his long race, slowly wends downwards to the place of his repose, looking back with a beaming glance of satisfaction on the bright things he has seen, and, like a benevolent heart, smiling at the blessings and the benefits he has left behind him.

The season of the year was one that has served poets and romance-writers a great deal, and which, with very becoming, but somewhat dishonest gratitude, they have praised ten times more than it deserves. It was, in short, spring—that season when we are often enticed to wander forth by a bright sky, as if for the express purpose of being wet to the skin by a drenching shower, or cut to the heart by the piercing east wind; that coquetish season, which is never for ten minutes in the same mind, which delights in disappointing expectations, and in frowning as soon as she has

smiled. Let those who love coquettes sing of spring ; for my part, I abhor the whole race of them. Nevertheless, there is something very engaging in that first youth of the year. We may be cross with its wild tricks and sportive mischief, we may be vexed at its whims and caprices, as with those of an untamed boy or girl, but yet there is a grace in its waywardness, a softness in its blue violet eyes, a brightness in its uncontaminated smile, a lustre even in the penitential tears, dried up as soon as shed, that has a charm we cannot, if we would, shake off. Oh, yes, youth and spring speak to every heart of hope, and hope is the magic of life ! Do you not see the glorious promise of great things to be done in that wild and wayward boy ? Do you not see the bright assurance of warmer and mellow days to come in that chequered April sky ? Youth, and spring, and hope, they are a glad triad, inseparable in essence, and all aspiring towards the everlasting goal of thought—the Future.

It was the month of May—now if poets and romance-writers, as we have before said, have

done injustice, or more than justice to spring, as a whole, never were two poor months so scandalously overpraised as April and May. The good old Scotch poet declares that in April,

‘Primroses paint the sweet plain,’
And summer returning rejoices the swain ;’

but rarely, oh, how rarely ! do we ever see primroses busy at such artistical work ; and as for summer, if he is returning at all, it is like a boy going back to school, and lingering sadly by the way. Such, at least, is the case now-a-days ; and the advice of another old poet, who tells us,

‘Stir not a clout,
Till May be out,’

would seem to prove that in ancient times, as well as at present, May was by no means so genial a month as it has pleased certain personages to represent it. Nevertheless, we know that every now and then in May, comes in a warm and summer-like day, bright, and soft, and beautiful, full of a tempered sunshine, appearing, after the cold days of winter, like

joy succeeding sorrow and entended by the memories of the past. Such was the sort of day upon which the traveller we have spoken of rode on upon his way through a very fair and smiling country. The season had been somewhat early in its expansion ; the weather had been unusually mild in March ; frequent and heavy showers had succeeded in April, and pouring through the veins of the earth the bountiful libation of the sky, had warmed the bosom of our common mother to a rich and lovely glow. The trees were all out in leaf, but yet not sufficiently unclosed to have lost the variety of hues displayed by the early buds. The colouring would have been almost that of autumn, so bright and manifold were the tints upon the wood, had it not been for a certain tenderness of aspect which spoke of youth and not decay. There was the oak in its red and brown, here and there mingled with the verdant hue of summer ; but beside it waved the beech, with its long arms robed in the gentlest and the softest green, the ash pointed its taper fingers in the direction where the wind was

going, and the larch lifted up its graceful spire, fringed with its grass-like filaments, while its beautiful cones, full of their coral studs, afforded ornaments that queens might be proud to wear. The fields were spangled with a thousand flowers, and every bank and hedge was jewelled with vegetable stars; not only the pale violet, and the yellow primrose, but the purple columbine and the white hawthorn, even the odorous-breathed cowslip, the wild geranium, and a long list beside, were all spreading their beauty in the evening air, and glittering with the drops of a shower not long passed by. Overhead, too, the sky was full of radiance, warm yet soft, deep in the azure, yet tinted with the evening light, as if the sunbeams were the threads of a crimson woof woven in with the blue warp of the sky.

But enough of this: it was a very fine evening, of a very fine day, of a very fine season, and that surely was enough to make any man happy who had good health, a guinea in his purse, and had not committed either murder or bigamy. The horseman seemed to feel the in-

fluence of the scene as much as could be expected of any man. When he was in a green bowery lane, with the wild plants trailing up and down the red banks, and he could neither look to the right nor to the left, he whistled snatches of a popular song : when he rose the side of the hill, and could gaze over the world around, he looked at the green fields, or the clear stream, or the woody coverts with searching and yet well satisfied eyes, and murmured to himself, "Capital sport here, I dare say!"

He seemed to be fond of variety, for sometimes he trotted his horse, sometimes made him canter, sometimes brought him into a walk, but it would appear that there was a certain portion of humanity mingling with the latent motives for these proceedings—inasmuch as the walk was either up or down a steep hill, the canter over a soft piece of turf wherever it could be found, and the trot, where the road was tolerably level. Ever and anon, too, he patted the beast's neck, and talked to him quite friendly, and the horse would have answered him in the same tone, beyond doubt, if horses'

throats and tongues had been formed by nature with the design of holding long conversations. Such not being the case, however, all the beast could do to express his satisfaction at his master's commendations, was to arch his neck and bend down his under lip till it touched his chest, and put his quivering ears backwards and forwards in a very significant manner. It was a handsome animal, of a bright bay colour, about fifteen hands and a half high, strongly built, yet showing a good deal of blood, and its coat was as soft and shining as satin. There was a good deal of red dust about its feet and legs, however, which showed that it had made a somewhat long journey ; but yet it displayed no signs of weariness: its head had no drowsy droop, like that of a county member on the back benches at three o'clock in the morning after a long debate. Oh no, there was muscle and courage for forty miles more, had it been necessary, and the noble beast would have done it right willingly. The horseman rode him well—that is to say, lightly ; and though he was tall, muscular, and powerful in frame,

many a man of less weight would have wearied his horse much more. His hand was light and easy, his seat was light and easy, and his very look was light and easy. There was no black care sat behind that horseman, so that the burden was not burdensome, and the pair went on together with alacrity and good fellowship. The gentleman's dress was in very good taste, neither too smart nor too plain, well fitted for a journey, yet not unfitted for a drawing-room in the morning. This is enough upon that subject, and I will not say another word about it; but as to his face, I must have a word or two more—it was gay and good-humoured, and though it might be called somewhat thoughtless in expression, yet somehow—I know not very well from what cause—when one examined it, one was convinced that the thoughtless look was more a matter of habit than of nature. He was dark in complexion, but with a healthy glow in his cheeks, and though certainly his face was not as perfect as that of the Apollo of Belvidere, yet few would have scrupled to pronounce him a good-looking

man. There was also an easy, almost careless swinging, rapid air about him, which generally engages kindly feelings, if it cannot secure much respect; and one could not watch him come cantering over the lea, with his open, smiling face, without judging he would make an entertaining, good-humoured companion, with whom any body might pass a few hours very pleasantly.

Thus he rode along, blithe as a lark, till the sun went down in glory, showing, at the distance of about a couple of miles, the spire of a small church in a small town—or perhaps I had better call it a village, for I am not sure that it had grown up to townhood in those days.

The hint that I have given that he could see the spire of the church must have shown the reader, that at the moment of the sun's setting he was on the brow of a hill, for there are no plains in that part of the country, and it was well wooded also. Down from the spot at which he had then arrived, in a line very nearly direct towards the spire, descended the

road, crossing first a small patch of common, perhaps not twenty acres in extent, and then entering between deep, shady banks, as it went down the hill, not only arched over with shrubs, but canopied by the branches of tall trees. There was quite sufficient light in the sky to show him the entrance of this green avenue, and he said to himself, as he looked on, "What a pretty approach to the village; how peaceful and quiet everything looks."

He was not aware that he had work to do in that quiet road, nor that it was to be of anything but a peaceful character; but so it is with us in life, we never know what is before us at the next step. We may scheme, and we may calculate; we may devise, and we may expect, but, after all, we are but blind men, led we know not whither by a dog, and the dog's name is, Fate.

When he saw that he was so near the village, he slackened his pace, and proceeded at a walk, wishing, like a wise and experienced equestrian, to bring his horse in cool. At the first trees of the road a deeper shade came

into the twilight. About half a mile farther it became quite dark under the boughs, whatever it might be in the open fields; the darkness did not make him quicken his pace, but the minute after he heard some sounds before him which did. It is not very easy to explain what those sounds were, or by what process it was, that, striking upon the tympanum of his ear, the two or three air-waves conveyed to his brain a notion that there were people in danger or distress at no great distance. There was a word spoken in a sudden and imperative tone, and that was the first sound he heard; and then there was a voice of remonstrance and entreaty, a woman's voice, and then something like a shriek, not loud and prolonged, but uttered as if the person from whose lips it came caught it as it was issuing forth, and strove to stifle it in the birth. Some loud swearing and oaths were next heard, mingled with the noise of quick footfalls, as if some one were running fast towards the spot from the side of the village, and the next moment the horseman perceived, at the first indistinctly,

and then clearly, a number of objects on the road before him, the largest, if not the most important of which, was a carriage. At the head of the horses which had drawn it stood a man with something in his hand which might be a pistol. At the side of the vehicle were two more, with a saddled horse standing by, and they were apparently dragging out of the carriage a lady who seemed very unwilling to come forth ; but from the village side of the scene was hurrying up, as hard as he could run, another personage of very different appearance from the three other men. By this time he was within ten yards of them ; and our horseman, from his elevation on his beast's back, could see the head and shoulders of him who was approaching, and judged at once that he was a gentleman.

I have said that under the trees it was quite dark, and yet that he could see all this, but neither of these is a mistake, whatever the reader may think ; for just at that part of the highway where the carriage stood, it was crossed by another road, which let in all that remained

of the western light, and there the whole scene was before his eyes, as a picture, even while he himself was in comparative darkness. Impulse is an excellent thing, and a great deal more frequently leads us right than reason, which, in cases of emergency, is a very unserviceable commodity. It is only necessary to have a clever impulse, and things go wonderfully well. The horseman stuck his spurs into his horse's sides: he had been going at a trot, since the first sounds struck his ear, but now it became a canter, and two or three springs brought him up to the carriage. He was making straight for the side, but the man who was at the horses' heads seemed to regard his coming as unpleasant, and shouting to him in a thundering voice to keep back, he presented a pistol straight at him with a sharp, disagreeable, clicking sound, which, under various circumstances, is peculiarly ungrateful to the human ear, especially when the muzzle of the instrument is towards us, for there is no knowing what may come out of the mouth at the next minute. But the horseman was quick, active,

and not accustomed to be daunted by a little thing like a pistol; and therefore, holding his heavy riding-whip by the wrong end, though in this instance it proved the right one, he struck the personage opposite to him a thundering blow over the arm. That limb instantly dropped powerless by his side, and the pistol went off under the horse's feet, causing the animal to rear a little, but hurting no one. In an instant, the horse was turned and amongst the party by the carriage; but that party was by this time increased in number, though not fortified by unanimity, for the person who had been seen running up, was by this time engaged in fierce struggle with one of the original possessors of the ground, while the other kept a tight grasp upon the lady who had just been dragged out of the carriage. With the two combatants our horseman thought it best not to meddle in the first instance, though he saw that the object of one of them was to get a pistol at the head of the other, who seemed neither unwilling nor unable to prevent him from accomplishing that object; but they were

grappling so closely, that it was difficult to strike one without hitting the other, especially in the twilight; and therefore, before he interfered in their concerns, he bestowed another blow, with the full sweep of his arm, upon the head of the man who was holding the lady, and who seemed to take so deep an interest in what was going on between the other two, as not to perceive that any one was coming up behind him. The worthy recipient instantly staggered back, and would have fallen, had not the wheel of the carriage stopped him; but then turning fiercely round, he stretched out his arm, and a flash and report followed, while a ball whistled past the horseman's cheek, went through his hair, and grazed his hat.

"Missed, on my life," cried the horseman; "take that for your pains, you clumsy hound." And he again struck him, though on this occasion the person's head was defended by his arm.

"H—l and d——n," cried the other, seizing his horse's bridle and trying to force him back upon his haunches, but another blow, which

made him stagger again, showed him that the combat was not likely to end in his favour, and darting past, he exclaimed, "Run, Wolf, run. The captain is off!" And before our friend on the bay horse could strike another blow at him, he had sprung upon the back of the beast that stood near, and without waiting to put his feet into the stirrups, galloped away as hard as he could go. In regard to the other two who were wrestling, as we have said, in deadly strife, the game they were playing had just reached a critical point, for the gentleman who had come up, had contrived to get hold of the barrel of the pistol, and at the very instant the other galloped away, the respectable person he called Wolf received a straightforward blow in the face, which made him stagger back, leaving his weapon in the hand of his opponent. Finding that his only advantage was gone, he instantly darted round the back of the carriage to make his escape up the other road.

"Jump down and stop him, post-boy," cried the horseman, pursuing him at the same time without a moment's pause, but the post-boy's

legs, though cased in leather, seemed to be made of wood, if one might judge by the stiff slowness with which they moved; and before he had got his feet to the ground, and his whip deliberately laid over the horse's back, the fugitive, finding that the horseman had cut him off from the road, caught the stem of a young ash, swung himself up to the top of the bank, and disappeared amongst the trees.

"Hark, there is a carriage coming," said the horseman, addressing the stranger, who had followed him as fast as two legs could follow four. They both paused for an instant and listened, but to their surprise the sound of rolling wheels, which they distinctly heard, diminished instead of increasing, and it became evident that some vehicle was driving away from a spot at no great distance.

"That's droll," said the horseman, dismounting; "but we had better see after the ladies, for I dare say they are frightened."

"No doubt they are," replied the other, in a mild and musical voice, leading the way round the carriage again. "Do you know who they are?"

“Not I,” answered the horseman—“don’t you?”

“No, I am a stranger here,” answered the other, approaching the side of the carriage, to which the lady who had been dragged out had now returned.

She was seated with her hands over her eyes, as if either crying with agitation or in deep thought; but the moment the gentleman who had come up on foot addressed her, expressing a hope that she had not been much alarmed, she replied, “Oh, yes, I could not help it; but my mother has fainted. We must go back, I fear.”

“It is not far, I think, to the village, madam,” said our friend the horseman, “and we will easily bring the lady to herself again; but it is a pity she fainted, too. These things will happen; and if they had not got your money there is no great harm done.”

“I am better, Mary,” said a voice from the other side of the carriage, faint and low, yet sweet and harmonious. “Are they gone—are you quite sure they are gone?”

“Oh, dear, yes, madam,” replied the horse-

man, while the lady next him laid her hand tenderly upon her mother's. "One of the worthies scampered off on horseback after he had fired at me, and the other was too quick for us all, thanks to your stiff-jointed driver. What became of the other fellow I don't know."

"You are not hurt, sir, I hope," said the younger of the two ladies, gazing timidly at him through the half light.

"Not in the least," he replied. "The man missed me, though it wasn't a bad shot after all, for I felt it go through my hair—but an inch one side or the other makes a wonderful difference—and now, ladies, what will you do?"

A murmured consultation took place between the two tenants of the carriage, while a whispered conference was held by the gentlemen who came to their assistance. It is wonderful how often in this world several parties of the good folks of which it is composed are all thinking—ay, and even talking—of the same thing, without any one group knowing what the other is about.

"I'm doubtful of that post-boy," said the gentleman on foot to the gentleman who had been on horseback.

"Ay, and so am I," replied the other. "He's in league with them, depend upon it. All post-boys are so. Their conscience is like the inn leather breeches, wide enough to fit anything. I wonder how far these two ladies are going?"

"I cannot tell," answered the other, "but it will be hardly safe for them to go alone."

"Can I speak to you, sir, for a moment," said the voice of the younger lady from the carriage, and the horseman advancing a step, leaned against the doorway, and put his head partly in, bending down his ear, as if he were perfectly certain that he was going to hear a secret.

"My mother thinks, and so do I," continued the young lady, "that the man who drives us must have been bribed by those people who attacked us, for he drove very slowly as soon as he came near this spot. He stopped, too, the moment they called to him."

"Perhaps not bribed, my dear madam," re-

plied the gentleman; "all these post-boys, as they are called, favour your honest highway-men, either in hopes of a part of the booty, or merely out of fellow feeling. They are every one of them amateurs, and some of them connoisseurs of the arts of the road. You must have some protection, that's certain, and I think it would be better for you to turn back and get some people from the village to accompany the carriage."

"I'm afraid that can hardly be," said the elder lady. "We are already very late, and this has delayed us. My brother may be dead ere we arrive, for I'm going on a sad errand, sir, he having been suddenly seized with gout in the stomach, and sent to call me to him in his last moment. However, it is not very far, and I trust that nothing more will happen."

"No, no, madam; you must not go without protection," replied the gentleman, in a good-humoured tone. "I will ride with you and see you safe—how far is it?"

"About five miles, I am afraid," answered the lady.

“Oh, that’s nothing—that’s nothing,” cried their companion. “It will but make me an hour later at supper.” And turning to the other gentleman, he continued, “I wish, sir, if you pass the inn called the White Hart——”

“I lodge there myself,” returned the stranger.

“Then pray tell the people to have a chicken ready in an hour,” continued the horseman. “It will be roasting while I am riding, so that will be one way of killing time, and not losing patience.”

Thus saying, with a gay laugh, he sprang upon his horse’s back, and addressing the post-boy, exclaimed, while the other gentleman shut the door, and bade the ladies adieu, “Now, boy, into the saddle; and remember, if these ladies are interrupted again, the first head that is broken shall be yours.”

The man made no reply, but got up with more alacrity than he had got down, and was soon trotting along the road at a rapid rate.

The horseman kept close to the carriage all the way, and after a ride of about five-and-thirty minutes, through pleasant lanes and

fields, they came to what seemed the gates of a park, but the porter's lodge was dim and unlighted, and the post-boy gave the horseman a significant hint that he had better get down and open the gates, as there was nobody there to do it for him. The gentleman, however, managed the feat dexterously without dismounting, and the carriage rolled through and entered a long avenue of magnificent chesnuts. Between the boughs of the trees, every here and there, were to be seen glimpses of soft green slopes studded with wild hawthorns, and masses of dark wood beyond, and at the end of about three quarters of a mile more, appeared a fine old stone house, with a somewhat flat but imposing face, like that of an old country gentleman, with a great idea of his own importance.

As the horseman looked up to the house, however, which was raised upon a little terrace, and approached by a gentle rise, he could not help thinking, "That does not look very much like the dwelling of a man dying of gout in the stomach; it looks more like that of one

getting up a good fit; for three windows on the ground floor, having very much of a dining-room aspect about them, were thrown up to admit the air, and in addition to a blaze of light, there came forth the sounds of merry laughter, and several persons talking.

The post-boy drove up to the great door, however, and the horseman, springing to the ground, rang the bell, after which, returning to the side of the carriage, he leaned against it, saying,

“ I trust your relation is better, madam, for the house does not seem to be one of mourning.”

The lady did not reply directly to his words, but she said, “ I hope if you remain in this part of the country, sir, you will give me an opportunity of thanking you, either here, or at my own house, called Hinton, for the great service you have rendered me. The people of the inn will direct you, for it is only ten miles on the other side of Tarningham.”

“ I shall certainly have the honour of waiting on you to inquire how you do,” replied the horseman, and then adding, “ these people do

not seem inclined to come," he returned to the bell, and rang it vigorously.

The next moment the door was opened, and a capacious butler appeared, and the stranger, without more ado, assisted the ladies to alight, remarking as he did so, that the younger of the two was an exceedingly pretty girl, some nineteen or twenty years of age.

"How is my brother now?" demanded the elder lady, who wore a widow's dress.

"Quite well, ma'am, thank you," answered the butler, in the most commonplace tone possible; and before she had time to make any more inquiries, the stranger who had come to her rescue wished her and her daughter good night, and, mounting his horse, rode down the avenue again.

CHAPTER II.

THE White Hart of Tarningham was a neat little country inn, such as was commonly found in most of the small towns of England at the period of my tale. They are rapidly being brushed off the face of the earth by the great broom of the steam-engine, and very soon the "pleasures of an inn" will be no longer known but by the records of history, while men run through the world at the rate of a hundred miles an hour, finding nothing on their way but stations and "hotels." I hate the very name, hotel. It is un-English, uncomfortable, unsatisfactory—a combination, I suppose, of host and hell—the recipient of perturbed spirits,

and their tormentor. But the word inn, how comfortable it is in all its significations! We have only retained the double *n* in it, that we may “wear our rue with a difference,” and whether we think of being *in* place, or *in* power, or *in* the house during a storm, or *in* the hearts of those we love, how pleasant is the feeling it produces! It has a home-like and British sound, and I do with all my heart wish that my fellow-countrymen would neither change their words nor their manners for worse things of foreign parentage. An inn, in the days I speak of, was a place famous for white linen, broiled ham, and fresh eggs. I cannot say that the beefsteaks were always tender, or the veal cutlets always done to a turn, or the beds always the softest in the world, but then think of the white dimity curtains, and the casements that rattled just enough to let you know that it was blowing hard without, and the rosy, apple-faced chambermaid, and the host himself, round as his own butts—ay, and as full of beer. An innkeeper of those days would have been ashamed to show himself under nineteen stone.

He was a part of his own sign, the recommendation of his own ale. His very paunch seemed to say "Look what it has done for me." It entered into his fat, it flowed through his veins, it puffed out his cheeks, it ran out at his eyes, and malt and hops was heard in every accent of his tongue. You had no lean, wizen-faced, black-silk-stockinged innkeepers in those days, and the very aspiring waiters imitated their landlord, and hourly grew fat under the eye, that they might be in a fit condition to marry the widow and take up the business when the "poor dear gentleman" was swallowed up in beer.

Such an inn was the White Hart at Tarn-ingham, and such a host was the landlord; but he was a wise man, and loved not to look upon his successors, for which cause, as well as on account of the trade not being very brisk in that quarter, he maintained no regular waiter; he had a tapster it is true, but the cloth in the neat little parlour on the left hand was laid by a white-capped, black-eyed, blooming maid-servant, and the landlord himself prepared

to carry in the first dish, and then leave his expected guest to the tendance of the same fair damsel.

The room was already occupied by one gentleman, the same who, in taking his evening walk, had joined with our friend the horseman in the rescue of the two ladies, and to say truth, it was owing to his courtesy that the cloth was laid there at all, for he had prior possession, and on communicating to the landlord the fact that a guest would soon arrive who proposed to sup upon roast chicken, the worthy host had exclaimed in a voice of consternation, "Good gracious me, what shall I do? I must turn those fellows out of the tap-room and serve it there, for there is old Mrs. Grover, the lawyer's widow, in the other parlour, and ne'er a sitting-room else in the house!"

"You can make use of this, landlord," replied the stranger; "this gentleman seems a very good-humoured person, and I do not think will be inclined to find fault, although he may not have a whole sitting-room to himself."

"I'd bet a quart," cried the landlord, as if a

sudden thought struck him, "I'd bet a quart that it's the gentleman whose portmanteaus and gun-cases and a whole bundle of fishing-rods came down this morning. I'll run and see what's the name."

Whatever he felt, the gentleman already in possession expressed no curiosity; but in two minutes the host rolled back again—for to run, as he threatened, was impossible—and informed his guest that the things were addressed to "Edward Hayward, Esq., to be left at the White Hart, Tarningham."

"Very well," said the guest, and without more ado, he took up a book which had been lying on the mantel-piece since the morning, and placing his feet upon another chair, began to read. The landlord bustled about the room, and put the things in order. One of his fat sides knocked his guest's chair, and he begged pardon, but the gentleman read on. He then took up the hat, which had been knocked off in the struggle near the chaise, wiped off the red sand which it had gathered, and exclaimed, "Lord bless me, sir! your hat's all beaten

about;" but his companion merely gave a nod, and read on.

At length, when the table was laid, and mustard, pepper, salt, vinegar, and bread had been brought in severally, when the maid had re-arranged what the landlord had arranged before, smoothed what he had smoothed, and brushed what he had brushed, a horse's feet, trotting past the window, were heard, and the minute after a voice exclaimed at the door of the inn, "Here, ostler, take my horse; loose the girths, but don't take off the saddle yet; sponge his mouth, and walk him up and down for five minutes. Has his clothing come?"

"Oh, dear, yes, sir—come this morning," answered the landlord. "This way, sir, if you please. Sorry you did not let me know before, for positively there is not a whole sitting-room in the house."

"Well, then, I will do with half of one," answered the stranger. "Why, my friend, if you grow any more you must have the doors widened. You are the man for defending a pass; for, upon my life, in default of harder

materials, you would block up Thermopylæ. Ale, ale, ale, it's all ale, landlord, and if you don't mind, it will set you ailing. Have my fishing-rods come down?—all safe I hope?" and by the time he had run through these questions and observations, he was in the doorway of the little parlour on the left-hand. He stared for a minute at the previous tenant of the room, who rose to receive him with a smile, and whose face he did not seem to have observed very accurately in the semi-darkness of the road. But the height and general appearance of the stranger soon showed him that they had met before, and with an easy, good-humoured, dashing air, he went up and shook him by the hand.

"A strange means of making acquaintance, my dear sir," he said, "but I'm very happy to see you again, and safe and well, too, for I thought at one time you were likely to get knocked on the head; and I scarcely dared to interfere, lest I should do it for you myself in trying to hit the other fellow. I hope you did not get any wounds or bruises in the affray?"

"Oh, no!" replied the stranger; "I was nearly strangled, that is certain, and shall not easily forget the grasp of that man's fingers on my throat; but in regard to this way of making an acquaintance, no two men, I should think, could desire a better than to be both engaged, even accidentally, in rescuing two ladies from wrong."

"Quite chivalrous!" exclaimed the horseman, laughing; "but two Don Quixotes would never do in the world; so I'll acknowledge, at once, that I've not the least spark of chivalry in my nature. If I see a strong thing hurting a weak thing, I knock the strong thing down, of course. I can't bear to see a big dog worry a little one, and don't much like to see a terrier catch a rat. But it's all impulse, my dear sir—all impulse. Thank Heaven, I am totally destitute of any sort of enthusiasm! I like everything in the world well enough, but do not wish to like anything too much, except, indeed, a particularly good bottle of claret—there, there, I am afraid I am weak. As to helping two ladies, it is always a very pleasant thing, especially if

one of them be a particularly pretty girl, as is the case in this instance, I can tell you; but we really should do something to have these fellows caught; for they might have had the decency to wait till it was quite dark, and not begin their lawless avocations before the sun has been down half an hour."

"I went immediately to a magistrate," answered the stranger; "but, as in very many country places, I did not find the ornament of the bench very highly enlightened. Because I was not the party actually attacked, he demurred to taking any steps whatever, and though I shook his resolution on that point, and he seemed inclined to accede to my demand, yet as soon as he found that I could not even give him the names of the two ladies, he went all the way back again, and would not even take my deposition. Perhaps, after supper, we had better go to him together, for I dare say you can supply my deficiency by this time, and tell him the name of your pretty lady and her mother."

"No; 'pon my life I can't," rejoined his companion; "I quite forgot to ask—a very

beautiful girl, though, and I wonder I didn't inquire, for I always like to ticket pretty faces. What is the name of your Midas? we'll soon bring him to reason, I doubt not. A country magistrate not take a deposition against a highwayman ! By Heaven, he will make the people think he goes shares in the booty !"

"A highwayman !" exclaimed the landlord, who had been going in and out, and listening to all that was said, whether he had a bread-basket, or boiled potatoes, or a jug of fresh drawn beer in his hand. "Why, lord, Mr. Beauchamp, you never told me !"

"No, my good friend," answered the other, "I did not, because to spread such a tale through an inn, is the very best way I know of insuring the highwayman's escape."

"Well, I dare say, my good round friend," exclaimed the horseman, whom we shall hereafter call Hayward, or as almost all who knew him had it, Ned Hayward, "I dare say you can help us to the names of these two ladies. Who was it one of your post-boys drove to-night, out there to the westward, to a house in a park ?"

"What, to Sir John Slingsby's?" exclaimed the host; but before he could proceed to answer the more immediate question, Ned Hayward gave himself a knock on the forehead, exclaiming,

"Sir John Slingsby's! Why, that's the very house I'm going to, and I never thought to ask the name—what a fool I am! Well might they call me, when I was in the 40th, Thoughtless Ned Hayward. But come, 'mine host of the Garter'——"

"Of the White Hart, your honour," replied the landlord, with as low a bow as his stomach would permit.

"Ay, of the White Hart be it then," said Ned Hayward; "let us hear who are these beautiful ladies whom your post-boy drove so slowly, and stopped with so soon, at the bidding of three gentlemen of the road, with pistols in their hands?"

"Lord-a-mercy!" cried the host, "and was it Mrs. Clifford and her daughter that they stopped? Well, I shouldn't wonder—but mum's the word—it's no affair of mine, and the least said is soonest mended."

The host's countenance had assumed a mysterious look. His whole aspect had an air of secrecy. He laid his finger upon the side of his nose, as men do for a practical exemplification of the process which is taking place in their mind when they are putting "that and that" together. He half closed one eye also, as if to give an indication to the beholders that whatever might be the mental light in his own brain, it should not escape for the illumination of those without. There is a perversity in human nature which makes all men—saving the exceptions that prove the general rule—eager to discover anything that is hidden, and consequently both Mr. Hayward and Mr. Beauchamp attacked the worthy landlord, *totis viribus*, and attempted to wrench from him his secret. He held it fast, however, with both hands, exclaiming,

"No, no, gentlemen, I'll not say a word—it's no business of mine—I've nothing to do with it—it's all guess work, and a man who beers and horses all the neighbourhood, must keep a good tongue in his head. But one thing I will

say, just to give you two gentlemen a hint, that perhaps you had better not meddle in this matter, or you may make a mess of it. Sally, is not that chicken ready?" And he called from the door of the room to the bar.

"I certainly shall meddle with it, my good friend," said Ned Hayward, in a determined tone, "and that very soon. I'm not the least afraid of making a mess, as you call it, certain that none of it will fall upon myself. So, as soon as we have got supper, which seems a very long time coming, we will set off, Mr. Beauchamp, if you please, for this good magistrate's, and try——"

He was interrupted in the midst of his speech, though it had by this time nearly come to a conclusion, by a voice in the passage, exclaiming, "Groomber! Mr. Groomber!" and the host instantly vociferated, "Coming, sir! coming!" and rushed out of the room.

The voice was heard to demand, as soon as the landlord appeared blocking up the way, "Have you a person by the name of Beauchamp here?"

"Yes, your worship," replied the host, and after a few more words, in a lower tone, the door of the room was thrown open, and Mr. Wittingham was announced, just as Mr. Beauchamp was observing to his new-found friend, Ned Hayward, that the voice was very like that of the worthy magistrate to whom he had applied.

Mr. Wittingham was a tall and very respectable-looking gentleman, somewhat past the middle age, and verging towards that decline of life which is marked by protuberance of the stomach, and thinness of the legs. But, nevertheless, Mr. Wittingham carried it off very well, for his height diminished the appearance of that which is usually called a corporation, and his legs were skilfully concealed in his top-boots. He was exceedingly neat in his apparel, tolerably rosy in the gills, and having a certain dogmatical peremptory expression, especially about the thick eyebrows and hook nose, which he found wonderfully efficacious in the decision of cases at petty sessions.

The moment he entered the room, he fixed

his eyes somewhat sternly upon Mr. Beauchamp (whom we have forgotten to describe as a very gentlemanlike—even distinguished—looking person of about thirty years of age), and addressing him in a rough, and rather uncivil tone, said, “Your name, I think you told me, is Beauchamp, sir, and you came to lay an information before me against certain persons for stopping a chaise upon the king’s highway.”

“I am, as you say, sir, called Beauchamp,” replied the other gentleman, “and I waited upon you, as the nearest magistrate, to give information of a crime which had been committed in your neighbourhood, which you refused to receive. Do me the honour of taking a seat.”

“And pray, sir, if I may be so bold as to ask, who and what are you?” inquired the magistrate, suffering himself to drop heavily into a chair.

“I should conceive that had very little to do with the matter,” interposed Ned Hayward, before Mr. Beauchamp could answer. “The

simple question is, whether an attempt at highway robbery, or perhaps a worse offence, has or has not been made this night, upon Mrs. and Miss Clifford, as they were going over to my friend Sir John Slingsby's; and allow me to say that any magistrate who refuses to take a deposition on such a subject, and to employ the best means at his command to apprehend the offenders, grossly neglects his duty."

The host brought in the roast fowl, and stared at the dashing tone of Ned Hayward's speech towards one of the magnates of the neighbourhood. Some words in the commencement of that speech had caused Mr. Wittingham's countenance to fall, but the attack upon himself in the conclusion, roused him to indignant resistance, so that his reply was an angry demand of "Who the devil are you, sir?"

"I am the devil of nobody, Mr. Wittington," answered Ned Hayward. "I am my own devil, if anybody's, and my name is Edward Hayward, commonly called Captain Hayward, late of the 40th regiment, and now unattached.

But as my supper is ready, I will beg leave to eat my chicken hot. Beauchamp, won't you join? Mr. Wittington, shall I give you a wing? Odd name, Wittington. Descendant of the renowned Lord Mayor of London, I presume?"

"No, sir—no," answered the magistrate, while Beauchamp could scarcely refrain from laughing. "What I want to know is, what you have to do with this affair?"

"Everything in the world," answered Ned Hayward, carving the chicken, "as I and my friend Beauchamp here had equal shares in saving the ladies from the clutches of these vagabonds. He came back here to give information, while I rode on with the ladies to protect them. Bring me a bottle of your best sherry, landlord. Now, I'll tell you what, Mr. Wittington—Haven't you got any ham that you could broil?—I hate chicken without ham, it's as insipid as a country magistrate. I'll tell you what, Mr. Wittington, this matter shall be investigated to the bottom, whether you like it or not; and I have taken care to leave such marks upon two of the vagabonds, that they'll

be easily known for the next month to come. One of them is very like you, by the way, but younger. I hit him just over the eye, and down about the nose, so that I'll answer for it I have lettered him in black and blue as well as any sheep in your fields; and we'll catch him before we've done, though we must insist upon having the assistance of the justices."

"I think, sir, you intend to insult me," said the magistrate, rising with a very angry air, and a blank and embarrassed countenance.

"Not a whit, my dear sir," answered Ned Hayward. "Pray sit down and take a glass of wine."

"I wont, sir," exclaimed Mr. Wittingham, "and I shall leave the room. If you have anything to say to me, it must come before me in a formal manner, and at a proper hour. To-morrow I shall be at the justice-room till eleven, and I hope you will be then prepared to treat the bench with respect."

"The most profound, sir," said Ned Hayward, rising and bowing till his face almost touched the table before him, and then as Mr.

Wittingham walked away with an indignant toss of the head, and closed the door behind him, our gay friend turned to his companion, saying, "There's something under this, Beauchamp. We must find out what it is."

CHAPTER III.

I WILL have nothing to do with antecedents. The reader must find them out if he can, as the story must explain what precedes the story.

The past is a tomb. There let events, as well as men, sleep in peace. Foul befall him who disturbs them; and indeed, were there not even a sort of profanation in raking up things done as well as in troubling the ashes of the dead, what does man obtain by breaking into the grave of the past? Nothing but dry bones, denuded of all that made the living act interesting. History is but a great museum of osteology, where the skeletons of great deeds are preserved without the muscles—here a tall fact

and there a short one; some sadly dismembered, and all crumbling with age, and covered with dust and cobwebs. Take up a skull, chap-fallen as Yorick's. See how it grins at you with its lank jaws and gumless teeth. See how the vacant sockets of the eyes glare meaningless, and the brow, where high intelligence sat throned, commanding veneration, looks little wiser than a dried pumpkin. And thus—even thus, as insignificant of the living deeds that have been, are the dry bones of history, needing the inductive imagination of a Cuvier to clothe them again with the forms that once they wore.

No, no; I will have nothing to do with antecedents. They were past before the Tale began, and let them rest.

Nevertheless, it is always well worth while, in order to avoid any long journeys back, to keep every part of the story going at once, and manfully to resist both our own inclination and the reader's, to follow any particular character, or class of characters, or series of events. Rather let us, going from scene to scene, and person to person, as often as it may be neces-

sary, bring them up from the rear. It is likewise well worth while to pursue the career of such new characters as may be introduced, till those who are newly made acquainted with him have discovered a sufficient portion of his peculiarities.

I shall therefore beg leave to follow Mr. Wittingham on his way homeward; but first I will ask the reader to remark him as he pauses for a moment at the inn-door, with worthy Mr. Groomber a step behind. See how the excellent magistrate rubs the little vacant spot between the ear and the wig with the fore-finger of the right-hand, as if he were a man amazingly puzzled, and then turns his head over his shoulder to inquire of the landlord if he knows who the two guests are, without obtaining any further information than that one of them had been for some weeks in the house—which Mr. Wittingham well knew before, he having the organ of Observation strongly developed—and that the other had just arrived; a fact which was also within the worthy magistrate's previous cognizance.

Mr. Wittingham rubs the organ above the

ear again, gets the finger up to Ideality, and rubs that, then round to Cautiousness, and having slightly excited it with the extreme point of the index of the right-hand, pauses there, as if afraid of stimulating it too strongly, and unmanning his greater purposes. But it is a ticklish organ, soon called into action, in some men, and see how easily Mr. Wittingham has brought its functions into operation. He buttons his coat up to the chin, as if it were winter, and yet it is as mild an evening as one could wish to take a walk in by the side of a clear stream, with the fair moon for a companion, or something fairer still. It is evident that Cautiousness is at work at a terrible rate, otherwise he would never think of buttoning up his coat on such a night as that; and now, without another word to the landlord, he crosses the street, and bends his steps homeward with a slow, thoughtful, vacillating step, murmuring to himself two or three words which our friend Ned Hayward had pronounced, as if they contained some spell which forced his tongue to their repetition.

“Very like me,” he said—“very like me? Hang the fellow! Very like me! Why, what the devil! Very like me! I shall have roystering Sir John upon my back—’pon my life, I do not know what to do. Perhaps it would be better to be civil to these two young fellows, and ask them to dinner; though I do not half like that Beauchamp—I always thought there was something suspicious about him, with his grave look, and his long solitary walks, nobody knowing him, and he knowing nobody. Yet this Captain Hayward seems a great friend of his, and he is a friend of Sir John’s—so he must be somebody—I wonder who the devil he is? Beauchamp?—Beauchamp? I shouldn’t wonder if he were some man rusticated from Oxford. I’ll write and ask Henry. He can most likely tell.”

The distance which Mr. Wittingham had to go was by no means great, for the little town contained only three streets—one long one, and two others leading out of it. In one of the latter, or rather at the end of one of the latter—for it verged upon the open country beyond the town—was a large house, his own particular dwelling, built upon the rise of the hill, with

large gardens and pleasure-grounds surrounding it, a new, well-constructed, neatly pointed brick wall, two green gates, and sundry conservatories. It had altogether an air of freshness and comfort about it, which was certainly pleasant to look upon, but it had nothing venerable. It spoke of fortunes lately made, and riches fully enjoyed, because they had not always been possessed. It was too neat to be picturesque—too smart to be in good taste. It was a bit of Clapham or Tooting transported a hundred or two of miles into the country—very suburban indeed!

And yet it is possible that Mr. Wittingham had never seen Clapham in his life, or Tooting either; for he had been born in the town where he now lived, had accumulated wealth as a merchant on a small scale, in a sea-port town about fifty miles distant; had improved considerably, by perseverance, a very limited stock of abilities; and, having done all this in a short time, had returned, at the age of fifty, to enact the country gentleman in his native place. With the ordinary ambition of low minds, however, he wished much that his origin, and the means

of his rise should be forgotten by those who knew them, concealed from those who did not ; and therefore he dressed like a country gentleman, spoke like a country gentleman, hunted with the fox-hounds, and added " J. P." to his " Esquire."

Nevertheless, do what he would, there was something of his former calling which still remained about him. It is a dirty world this we live in, and everything has its stain. A door is never painted five minutes, but some indelible finger-mark is printed on it ; a table is never polished half an hour, but some drop of water falls and spots it. Give either precisely the same colour again, if you can ! Each trade, each profession, from the shopkeeper to the prime minister, marks its man more or less for life, and I am not quite sure that the stamp of one is much fouler than that of another. There is great vulgarity in all pride, and most of all in official pride, and the difference between that vulgarity and the vulgarity of inferior education is not in favour of the former ; for it affects the mind, while the other principally affects the manner.

Heaven and earth, what a ramble I have taken ! but I will go back again gently by a path across the fields.

Something of the merchant—the small merchant—still hung about Mr. Wittingham. It was not alone that he kept all his books by double entry, and even in his magisterial capacity, when dealing with rogues and vagabonds, had a sort of debtor and creditor account with them, very curious in its items ; neither was it altogether that he had a vast idea of the importance of wealth, and looked upon a good banker's book, with heavy balance in favour, as the chief of the cardinal virtues ; but there were various peculiarities of manner and small traits of character, which displayed the habit of mind to inquiring eyes very remarkably. His figures of speech, whenever he forgot himself for a moment, were all of the counting-house : when on the bench he did not know what to do with his legs for want of a high stool ; but the trait with which we have most to do was a certain propensity to inquire into the solidity and monetary respectability of all men, whether

they came into relationship with himself or not. He looked upon them all as "Firms," with whom at some time he might have to transact business ; and I much doubt whether he did not mentally put "and Co." to the name of every one of his acquaintances. Now Beauchamp and Co. puzzled him ; he doubted that the house was firm ; he could make nothing out of their affairs ; he had not, since Mr. Beauchamp first appeared in the place, been able even to get a glimpse of their transactions ; and though it was but a short distance, as I have said, from the inn to his own dwelling, before he had reached the latter, he had asked himself at least twenty times, " Who and what Mr. Beauchamp could be ? "

" I should like to look at his ledger," said Mr. Wittingham to himself at length, as he opened his gate and went in ; but there was a book open for Mr. Wittingham in his own house, which was not likely to show a very favourable account.

Although the door of Mr. Wittingham's house, which was a glass door, stood confidently un-

locked as long as the sun was above the horizon, yet Mr. Wittingham had always a pass-key in his pocket, and when the first marble step leading from the gravel walk up to the entrance was found, the worthy magistrate's hand was always applied to an aperture in his upper garment just upon the haunch, from which the key was sure to issue forth, whether the door was open or not.

The door, however, was now shut, and the pass key proved serviceable; but no sooner did Mr. Wittingham stand in the passage of his own mansion than he stopped short in breathless and powerless astonishment; for there before him stood two figures in close confabulation, which he certainly did not expect to see in that place, at that time, in such near proximity.

The one was that of a woman, perhaps fifty-five years of age, but who looked still older from the fact of being dressed in the mode of thirty years before. Her garments might be those of an upper servant, and indeed they were so; for the personage was neither more

nor less than the housekeeper; but to all appearance she was a resuscitated housekeeper of a former age; for the gown padded in a long roll just under the blade-bones, the straight cut bodice, the tall but flat-crowned and wide-spreading cap, were not of the day in which she lived, and her face too was as dry as the outer shell of a cocoa-nut. The other figure had the back turned to the door, and was evidently speaking earnestly to Mrs. Billiter; but it was that of a man, tall, and although slightly made, yet sinewy and strong.

Mr. Wittingham's breath came thick and short; but the noise of his suddenly opening the door, and his step in the hall, made the housekeeper utter a low cry of surprise, and caused her male companion to turn quickly round. Then Mr. Wittingham's worst apprehensions were realized, for the face he saw before him was that of his own son, though somewhat disfigured by an eye swollen and discoloured, and a deep long cut just over it on the brow.

The young man seemed surprised and con-

founded by the unexpected apparition of his father, but it was too late to shirk the encounter, though he well knew it would not be a pleasant one. He was accustomed, too, to scenes of altercation with his parent; for Mr. Wittingham had not proceeded wisely with his son, who was a mere boy when he himself retired from business. He had not only alternately indulged him and thwarted him; encouraged him to spend money largely, and to dazzle the eyes of the neighbours by expense, at the same time limiting his means and exacting a rigid account of his payments; but as the young man had grown up, he had continued sometimes to treat him as a boy, sometimes as a man; and while he more than connived at his emulating the great in those pleasures which approach vices, he denied him the sums by which such a course could alone be carried out.

Thus a disposition naturally vehement and passionate, had been rendered irritable and reckless, and a character self-willed and perverse had become obstinate and disobedient. Dispute after dispute arose between father and

son after the spoilt boy became the daring and violent youth, till at length Mr. Wittingham, for the threefold purpose of putting him under some sort of discipline, of removing him from bad associates, and giving him the tone of a gentleman, had sent him to Oxford. One year had passed over well enough; but at the commencement of the second year, Mr. Wittingham found that his notions of proper economy were very different from his son's, and that Oxford was not likely to reconcile the difference. He heard of him horse-racing, driving stage-coaches, betting on pugilists, gambling, drinking, getting deeper and deeper in debt; and his letters of remonstrance were either not answered at all, or answered with contempt.

A time had come, however, when the absolute necessity of recruiting his finances from his father's purse had reduced the youth to promises of amendment and a feigned repentance; and just at the time our tale opens, the worthy magistrate was rocking himself in the cradle of delusive expectations, and laying out many a

plan for the future life of his reformed son, when suddenly as we have seen, he found him standing talking to the housekeeper in his own hall with the marks of a recent scuffle very visible on his face.

The consternation of Mr. Wittingham was terrible; for though by no means a man of ready combinations in any other matter than pounds, shillings, and pence, his fancy was not so slow a beast as to fail in joining together the description which Ned Hayward had given of the marks he had set upon one of the worthy gentlemen who had been found attacking Mrs. Clifford's carriage, and the cuts and bruises upon the fair face of his gentle offspring. He had also various private reasons of his own for supposing that such an enterprise as that which had been interrupted in Tarningham-lane, as the place was called, might very well come within the sphere of his son's energies, and for a moment he gave himself up to a sort of apathetic despair, seeing all his fond hopes of rustic rule and provincial importance dashed to the ground by the conduct of his own child.

It was reserved for that child to rouse him from his stupor, however; for, though undoubtedly the apparition of his father was anything but pleasant to Henry Wittingham, at that particular moment, when he was arranging with the housekeeper (who had aided to spoil him with all her energies) that he was to have secret board and lodging in the house for a couple of days, without his parent's knowledge, yet his was a bold spirit, not easily cowed, and much accustomed to outface circumstances however disagreeable they might be. Marching straight up to his father, then, without a blush, as soon as he had recovered from the first surprise, he said, "So, you see I have come back, sir, for a day or two, to worship my household gods, as we say at Oxford, and to get a little more money; for you did not send me enough. However, it may be as well, for various reasons, not to let people know that I am here. Our old dons do not like us to be absent without leave, and may think that I ought to have notified to them my intention of giving you an agreeable surprise."

Such overpowering impudence was too much for Mr. Wittingham's patience, the stock of which was somewhat restricted; and he first swore a loud and very unmagisterial oath; then, however, recollecting himself, without abating one particle of his wrath, he said, in a stern tone and with a frowning brow, "Be so good as to walk into that room for five minutes, sir."

"Lord, sir—don't be angry," exclaimed the housekeeper, who did not at all like the look of her master's face—"it is only a frolic, sir."

"Hold your tongue, Billiter! You are a fool," thundered Mr. Wittingham. "Walk in there, sir, and you shall soon hear my mind as to your frolics."

"Oh, certainly, I will walk in," replied his son, not appearing in the least alarmed, though there was something in the expression of his father's countenance that did frighten him a little, because he had never seen that something before — something difficult to describe — a struggle as it were with himself, which showed the anger he felt to be more profound than he

thought it right to display all at once. "I certainly will walk in, and take a cup of tea if you will give me one," and as he spoke he passed the door into the library.

"You will neither eat nor drink in this house more, till your conduct is wholly changed, sir," said Mr. Wittingham, shutting the door behind him; "the books are closed, sir—there is a large balance against you, and that must be liquidated before they can be opened again. What brought you here?"

"What I have said," answered the young man, beginning to feel that his situation was not a very good one, but still keeping up his affected composure, "the yearnings of filial affection, and a lack of pocket-money."

"So, you can lie, too, to your father," said Mr. Wittingham, bitterly. "You will find that I can tell the truth, however, and to begin, I will inform you of what brought you hither—but no, it would take too much time to do that; for the sooner you are gone the better for yourself and all concerned—you must go, sir, I tell you—you must go directly."

A hesitation had come upon Mr. Witting-

ham while he spoke ; his voice shook, his lip quivered, his tall frame was terribly agitated ; and his son attributed all these external signs of emotion to a very different cause from the real one. He thought he saw in them the symptoms of a relenting parent, or at least of an irresolute one, and he prepared to act accordingly ; while his father thought of nothing but the danger of having him found in his house, after the commission of such an outrage as that which he had perpetrated that night ; but the very thought made him tremble in every limb—not so much for his son, indeed, as for himself.

“ I beg pardon, my dear sir,” replied the young man, recovering all his own impudence at the sight of his father’s agitation, “ but it would not be quite convenient for me to go to-night. It is late ; I am tired ; my purse is very empty.”

“ Pray how did you get that cut upon your head ?” demanded the magistrate, abruptly.

“ Oh, a little accident,” replied his son ; “ it is a mere scratch—nothing at all.”

“It looks very much like a blow from the butt-end of a heavy horsewhip,” said his father, sternly; “just such as a man who had stopped two ladies in a carriage might receive from a strong arm come to their rescue. You do not propose to go, then? Well, if that be the case, I must send for the constable and give you into his hands, for there is an information laid against you for felony, and witnesses ready to swear to your person. Shall I ring the bell, or do you go.”

The young man’s face had turned deadly pale, and he crushed the two sides of his hat together between his hands. He uttered but one word, however, and that was, “Money.”

“Not a penny,” answered Mr. Wittingham, turning his shoulder, “not one penny; you have had too much already—you would make me bankrupt and yourself too.” The next moment, however, he continued, “Stay; on one condition, I will give you twenty pounds.”

“What is it?” asked the son, eagerly, but somewhat fiercely, too, for he suspected that the condition would be hard.

“It is that you instantly go back to Oxford, and swear by all you hold sacred—if you hold any thing sacred at all—not to quit it for twelve months, or till Mary Clifford is married.”

“You ask what I cannot do,” said the son, in a tone of deep and bitter despondency, contrasting strangely with that which he had previously used; “I cannot go back to Oxford. You must know all in time, and may as well know it now—I am expelled from Oxford; and you had your share in it; for had you sent me what I asked, I should not have been driven to do what I have done. I cannot go back; and as to abandoning my pursuit of Mary Clifford, I will not do that either. I love her, and she shall be mine, sooner or later, let who will say No.”

“Expelled from Oxford!” cried Mr. Wittingham, with his eyes almost starting from their sockets. “Get out of my sight, and out of my house; go where you will—do what you will—you are no son of mine any more. Away with you, or I will myself give you into custody, and sign the warrant for your committal. Not a

word more, sir—begone ! y ou may take your clothes, if you will ; but let me see no more of you. I cast you off ; begone, I say.”

“ I go,” answered his son, “ but one day you will repent of this, and wish me back, when perhaps you will not be able to find me.”

“ No fear of that,” answered Mr. Wittingham ; “ if you do not return till I seek you, the house will be long free from your presence. Away with you at once, and no more words.”

Without reply, Henry Wittingham quitted the room, and hurried up to the bed-chamber which he inhabited when he was at home, opened several drawers, and took out various articles of dress, and some valuable trinkets—a gold chain, a diamond brooch, two or three jewelled pins and rings. He lingered a little, perhaps fancying that his father might relent, perhaps calculating what his own conduct should be when he was summoned back to the library. But when he had been about five minutes in his chamber, there was a tap at the door ; and the housekeeper came in.

“ It is no use, Billiter,” said the young man ;

"I am going. My father has treated me shamefully."

"It is no use indeed, Master Harry," replied the good woman; "he is as hard as stone. I have said every thing he would let me say: but he drove me out of the room like a wild beast. But don't give it up, Master Harry. Go away for a day or two to Buxton's inn, by Chandleigh—he'll come round in time, and you can very well spend a week or so there, and be very comfortable."

"But money, Billiter—money!" exclaimed the young man, whose heart had sunk again to find that all his expectations of his father's resolution giving way were vain. "I have but a few pounds in my pocket. What shall I do for money?"

"Stay a bit—stay a bit," said the good woman; "what I have got you may have, Master Harry, as welcome as the flowers in May. I've ten pounds here in this little purse," and she dived into one of the large pockets that hung outside of her capacious petticoat, producing a very dirty old knitted purse with

a steel clasp, and adding, as she placed it in her young master's hand, "It is a pity now that Mr. Wittingham wheedled me into putting all the rest of my earnings into the Tarningham bank, where he has a share—but that will do for the present, if you are careful, Master Harry—but don't go to drink claret and such expensive nasty stuff, there's a good boy!"

"That I won't, Billiter," answered Henry Wittingham, pocketing the money without remorse of conscience, "and I will repay you when I can—some day or another I shall certainly be able, for the houses at Exmouth are settled upon me;" and packing up all that he thought fit to take in a large silk handkerchief, he opened the door again, and began to descend the stairs. A chilly sensation crept over him ere he reached the bottom, as memory brought back happy days, and he thought that he was going forth from the home of his youth, perhaps for ever; that he was an exile from his father's dwelling, from his love, an outcast, a wanderer, with nothing but his own wayward spirit for his guide—nought but his own pride

for his support. He was not yet sufficiently hardened to bear the shadow of his exile lightly, to look upon it as a relief from restraint, a mere joyous adventure, which would have its interest during its progress, and would soon be over. But, nevertheless, his pride was strong, and as yet unchecked; and when the thought of going back to his father, asking his forgiveness, and promising all that he required, crossed his mind, he cast it from him with disdain, saying, "Never! never! He shall ask me humbly first." And, with this very lowly determination, he walked out of the house.

"I shall be able to hear of you at Buxton's, by Chandleigh," said the housekeeper, as he stood just beyond the threshold.

"Yes, yes, you will hear of me there," he replied, and descending the steps, he was soon wandering in darkness amongst parterres, every step of the way being as familiar to him as his father's library.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER a few words of common observation upon Mr. Wittingham and his proceedings when that excellent gentleman had left the room at the little inn of Tarningham, Ned Hayward fell into a very unusual fit of thought.

I do not mean in the least to say that it was unusual for Ned Hayward to think; for probable he thought as much as other men, but there are various ways of thinking. There are pondering, meditating, brown-studying, day-dreaming, revolving, considering, contemplating; and though many of these terms may at first sight seem synonymous, yet upon close examination it will be found that there are

shades of difference between the meanings. Besides these ways or modes of thinking, there are various other mental processes, such as investigating, examining, disentangling, inquiring, but with these I will not meddle, as my business is merely with the various operations of the mind which require various degrees of rapidity. Now, though Ned Hayward, as I have said, probably thought as much as other men, his sort of thought was generally of a very quick and active habit. He was not fond of meditating, his mind's slowest pace was a canter, and when he found an obstacle of any kind—hedge, gate, fence, or stone wall—he took up his stirrups and went over it. Now, however, for once in his life, he paused and pondered for full five minutes; and then thinking perhaps it might seem a little rude if he treated his new-found friend to nothing but meditation, he began to talk of other things, still meditating over the former subject of his contemplations all the while.

It must not be supposed, however, that he did not think of what he was saying. Such a

supposition might indeed be founded upon the old axiom that men cannot do two things at once. But the axiom is false: there never was a falser. We are always doing many things at once. There would be very little use of our having hands and feet, tongues and eyes, ears and nose, unless each of our organs with a little practice could go on quite quietly in its little workshop, without disturbing the others. Indeed, it is very serviceable sometimes to give our more volatile members something light to do, when we are employing others upon more serious business, just to keep them out of the way, as we do with noisy children. So also is it with the mind and its faculties, and it is not only quite possible, depend upon it, dear reader, to think of two subjects at once, but very common also.

Totally unacquainted with Mr. Beauchamp's habits and character, or what topics he could converse upon, and what not, Ned Hayward naturally chose one which seemed perfectly indifferent and perfectly easy; but it led them soon to deeper considerations, as a very small

key will often open a very large door. It led to some political discussions, too ; but let it be remarked, this is not a political novel, that most wearisome and useless of all the illegitimate offsprings of literature, and therefore if I give a few sentences of their conversation, it is not to insinuate sneakingly my own opinions, but merely to display my characters more fully.

"This seems a very pretty little town," said Ned Hayward, choosing the first free subject at hand ; "quite rural, and with all the tranquillity of the country about it."

"It is, indeed," answered Mr. Beauchamp ; "but I should almost have supposed that a gayer place would have pleased you more. Were you never here before?"

"Never in my life," replied his companion ; "but you are quite mistaken about my tastes. London, indeed, is a very pleasant place for three months or so ; but one soon grows tired of it. It gets slow—very slow, after a while. One cannot go to the theatre every night. There is little use of going to balls and parties, and risking falling in love, if one has not money

enough to marry. One gets weary of the faces and the houses in St. James's-street. Morning visits are the greatest bores in the world. Epsom and Ascot are good enough things in their way, but they are soon over for one who does not bet and runs no horses. The newspapers tire me to death—romances I abominate; and though a good opera comes in twice a week to lighten the load a little, it gets desperately heavy on one's shoulders before the first of July. Antiquaries, connoisseurs, lawyers, physicians, fiddlers, and portrait-painters, with merchants, and all the bees of the hive, may find London a very pleasant and profitable place. I am nothing but a drone, and so I fly away into the country. Of all towns after the second month, I hate London the most—except a manufacturing town, indeed, and that is always horrible, even to change horses in."

"And yet, perhaps," answered Beauchamp, "a manufacturing town offers subjects of deeper interest than any other spot of the earth—especially at the present moment."

"Not in themselves, surely," said Ned Hay-

ward; "the abstract idea of broad cloth is to me very flat, cotton-spinning not particularly exciting, iron ware is far too hard for me to handle, and as for the production of soda and pearlash, I have no genius that way. But I suppose," he continued, "you mean that the manufacturing towns are interesting from their bearing upon the prosperity of the country; but in that case, it is your speculations regarding them that interest you, not the places themselves."

"So it is with everything," answered Mr. Beauchamp; "no single image or impression gives us great pleasure. It is in their combination that our enjoyment dwells. Single ideas are but straight lines, blank plains, monotonous patches of colour. Associate them with other shapes and hues, and you produce beauty and pleasure. Thus with the manufacturing towns; if I only went to see a steam-engine work, a shuttle play, or a spindle turn, I should soon be tired enough; but when in all that I behold there I perceive a new development of man's mind, a fresh course opened for his energies



when old ones are exhausted, when I discover the commencement of a great social change, which shall convert the pursuits of tribes and nations from agricultural to manufacturing—or rather, which shall throw the great mass of human industry, for which its former sphere was too small, into another and almost interminable channel, I feel that I am a spectator of a great social phenomenon, as awful and as grand as the lightning that rends the pine, or the earthquake that overthrows the mountain. It is magnificent, yet terrible; beautiful, but still sad.”

“Why sad?” demanded Ned Hayward. “I have considered the matter in the same light a little, and have talked with various grave manufacturers about it; but they all seem to see nothing in it but what is very fine and pleasant. They have no apprehension for the result, or doubts about its doing a great deal of good to everybody in the end.”

“The end!” said Beauchamp. “Where is the end? What will the end be? They see nothing but good; they augur nothing but good,

because they are actively employed in that one particular course, and buoyed up with those sanguine expectations which active exertion always produces. Neither do I doubt that the end will be good; but still, ere that end be reached, how much misery, how much strife, how much evil must be encountered. One needs but to set one's foot in a factory, ay, or in a manufacturing town, to see that the evil not only will be, but is; that we are wading into a dark stream which we must pass over, and are already knee deep. I speak not of the evils inseparable from the working of any great change in the relations of society, or in its objects. As we can never climb a hill without some fatigue, so we can never reach a higher point in social advance without some suffering; but that inevitable evil I look upon as light, compared with many other things before us. I doubt not that in God's good providence new resources will be ever opened before mankind for the employment of human industry; but when I see even a temporary superfluity of labour, I tremble to think of

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what vast power of grinding and oppressing that very circumstance places in the hands of the employer. Combine that power with the state of men's minds at present, and all the tendencies of the age; remember that to accumulate wealth, to rival others in luxury and display, to acquire at any price and by any means, is a part not of the manufacturer's spirit, but of the spirit of the age, and especially of this country, and then see to what purposes must and will be applied that vast authority or command which the existing superabundance of labour, brought about by mechanical inventions, and the natural increase of population, intrusts to those who have already the power of wealth. Were it not for this spirit acting through this power, should we see in our manufactories such squalid misery, such enfeebled frames, such overtasked exertions, such want of moral and religious culture, such recklessness, such vice, such infamy, such famine?"

"Perhaps not," answered Ned Hayward; "but yet something is to be said for the manufacturers, too. You see, my good sir, they have

to compete with all Europe. They are, as it were, running a race, and they must win it, even if they break their horses' wind."

"If they do that, they will lose it," replied Beauchamp; "but yet I do not blame them. I blame the spirit of the times we live in. They only share it with other men; many of them are humane, kind, generous, just, who do as much good and as little evil as the iron hand of circumstances will permit; and were all to strive in the same manner, and to the same degree, that iron hand would be broken, and all would be wiser, happier, better—ay, even wealthier than they are; but, alas! the example of the good has little influence on the rest on the same level with themselves; and the example of the bad, immense influence on every grade beneath them. The cupidity of the great mill-owner is imitated and exceeded by those below him. He robs the poor artizan of his labour, by allowing him as little out of the wealth his exertions earn as the superfluity of industry compels the artizan to take, and justifies himself with the cold axiom, that he

is not bound to pay more than other men; those in authority below him rob the same defenceless being of a great part of even those poor wages by a more direct kind of plunder, and have their axiom too. One of the great problems of the day is this: what proportion of the profits accruing from the joint operation of capital and labour is to be assigned to each of those two elements? And the day will come ere long, depend upon it, when that great problem must be solved—I trust, not in bloody characters. At present, there is no check to secure a fair division; and so long as there is none, wealth will always take advantage of poverty, and the competition for mere food will induce necessity to submit to avarice, till the burden becomes intolerable—and then——”

“What then?” asked Ned Hayward.

“Nay, God forbid,” answered Beauchamp, “that the fears which will sometimes arise should ever be verified. A thousand unforeseen events may occur to waft away the dangers that seem to menace us; but I cannot help thinking that in the meantime there are

many duties neglected by those who have the power to interfere; for surely, if any foresight be wisdom, any human providence a virtue, they are the foresight which perceives the future magnitude of evils yet in the bud, and the providence that applies a remedy in time."

"Very true," answered Ned Hayward; "things do look rather badly; but I dare say all will get right at last. I have not thought of such things very deeply—not half so deeply as you have done, I know; but still I have been sorry to see, in many of our great towns, the people so wretched-looking; and sometimes I have thought that if better care were taken of them—I mean both in mind and body—our judges at the assizes would not have so much to do. Just as fevers spread through whole countries from a great congregation of sickly people, so crimes extend through a land from great congregations of vicious people. For my part, if, like our good friend Abon Hassan, I could but be caliph for a short time, I'd open out all the narrow streets, and drain all the foul lands, and cultivate all ignorant minds, and try to purify

all the corrupt hearts, by the only thing that can purify them. But I am not caliph; and if I were, the task is above me, I fancy: but still, if it could be accomplished, even in part, I am quite sure that jurymen would dine earlier, lawyers have less to do, courts would rise at three o'clock, and the lord-mayor and sheriffs eat their turtle more in peace. But talking of that, do you know I have been thinking all this while, how we could get some insight into this affair of the highway robbery; for I am determined I will not let the matter sleep. Highway robberies are going quite out of fashion. I have not heard of one for these four months. Hounslow Heath is almost as safe as Berkeley-square, and Bagshot no more to be feared than Windsor Castle. It is a pity to let such things revive; and there is something about that old fellow Wittingham which strikes me as odd. Another thing, too, was funny enough. Why should they pull the young lady out of the chaise? She could just as well have handed her purse and her trinkets out of the window!"

"That seemed strange to me also," answered

Beauchamp. "But how do you propose to proceed?"

"Why, I think the best way will be to frighten the post-boy," replied Ned Hayward. "He's in league with the rogues, whoever they are, depend upon it; and if he thinks his neck's in a noose, he'll peach."

"That is not improbable," said his companion: "but we had better proceed cautiously; for if we frighten him into denying all knowledge of the parties, he will adhere to his story for mere consistency's sake."

"Oh, I'll manage him—I will manage him," answered Ned Hayward, who had carried so many points in his life by his dashing straightforwardness, that he had very little doubt of his own powers. "Come along, and we will see. Let us saunter out into the yard, in a quiet, careless way, as if we were sentimental, and loved moonlight. We shall find him somewhere rubbing down his horses, or drinking a pint on the bench."

The two gentlemen accordingly took their hats, and issued forth, Ned Hayward leading

the way first out into the street through a glass-door, and then round into the yard by an archway. This manœuvre was intended to elude the vigilant eyes of Mr. Groomber, and was so far successful that the landlord, being one of that small class of men who can take a hint, did not come out after them to offer his services, though he saw the whole proceeding, and while he was uncorking sherry, or portioning out tea, or making up a bill, kept one eye—generally the right—turned towards a window that looked in the direction of the stables. Before those stables the bright moon was laying out her silver carpeting, though, truth to say, she might have found a cleaner floor to spread it on; and there, too, paraded up and down our friends, Ned Hayward and Mr. Beauchamp, looking for the post-boy who had driven Mrs. Clifford and her daughter, but not perceiving him in any direction, Ned Hayward began to suspect he had reckoned without his host. The man was not rubbing down his horses, he was not drinking a pint on the bench, he was not smoking a pipe at the inn door.

"Well," he said at length, "I will look into all the stables to see after my horse. It is but right I should attend to his supper now I have had my own, and perhaps we may find what we are looking for on the road. Let us wait awhile, however, till that one-eyed ostler is passed, or he will tell us where the horse is, and spoil our manœuvre." And, walking on, he pointed out to Beauchamp a peculiar spot upon the moon's surface, and commented upon it, with face upturned, till the inconvenient ostler had gone by.

At that moment, however, another figure appeared in the yard, which at once brought light into Ned Hayward's mind. It was not a pretty figure, nor had it a pretty face belonging to it. The back was bowed and contorted in such a manner as to puzzle the tailor exceedingly to fit it with a fustian jacket when it required a new one, which luckily was not often; the legs were thin, and more like a bird's than a human being's, and though the skull was large and not badly shaped, the features that appeared below the tall forehead seemed all to be squeezed to-

gether, so as to acquire a rat-like expression, not uncommon in the deformed. The head, which was bare, was thatched with thin yellow hair, but the eyes were black and clear, and the teeth large and white. The garments which this poor creature wore, were those of an inferior servant of an inn; and his peculiar function seemed to be denoted by a tankard of beer, which he carried in his hand from the door of the tap towards the stables.

“He is carrying our friend his drink,” said Ned Hayward, in a whisper to Beauchamp, “let us watch where the little pot-boy goes in, and I’ll take seven to one we find the man we want.”

The pot-boy gave a shrewd glance at the two gentlemen as he passed them, but hurried on towards one of the doors far down the yard, which, when it was opened, displayed a light within; and as soon as he had deposited his tankard and returned, those who had watched him followed his course, and threw back the same door without ceremony. There before them, seated astride on a bench, was the post-

boy of whom they were in search. They had both marked him well by the evening light, and there could be no doubt of his identity, though by this time he had got his hat and jacket off, and was sitting with a mane-comb on one hand and a currycomb on the other, and the tankard of beer between them. He was a dull, unpleasant, black-bearded sort of fellow of fifty-five or six, with a peculiarly cunning gray eye, and a peculiarly resolute slow mouth; and as soon as Ned Hayward beheld the expression by the light of a tallow-candle in a high state of perspiration, he muttered, "We shall not make much of this specimen."

Nevertheless, he went on in his usual careless tone addressing the lord of the posting-saddle, and saying, "Good night, my man; I want you to tell me where I can find a gentleman I wish to see hereabouts."

The post-boy had risen, and pulled the lock of short black and white hair upon his forehead, but without looking a bit more communicative than at first, and he merely answered, "If I knows where he lives, sir. What's his name?"

“Why, that’s another matter,” replied Ned Hayward; “perhaps he may not much like his name mentioned; but I can tell you what people call him sometimes. He goes by the name of Wolf occasionally.”

The slightest possible twinkle of intelligence came into the man’s eyes for a moment, and then went out again, just as when clouds are driving over the sky at night, we sometimes see something sparkle for an instant, and then disappear from the heavens, so faint while it is present, and so soon gone, that we cannot tell whether it be a star or not.

“Can’t say I ever heard of such a gemman here, sir,” replied the post-boy. “There is Billy Lamb, sir, the pot-boy, but that’s the nearest name to Wolf we have in these parts.”

“Why, my good friend, you saw him this very night,” said Mr. Beauchamp, “when the chaise was stopped that you were driving. He was one of the principals in that affair.”

“Likely, sir,” answered the other, “but they were all strangers to me—never set eyes on one on ’em afore. But if you knows ’em, you’ll

soon catch 'em; and that will be a good job, for it is very unpleasant to be kept a waiting so. It's as bad as a 'pike."

"I've a notion," said Ned Hayward, "that you can find out my man for me if you like; and if you do, you may earn a crown; but if you do not you may get into trouble, for concealing felons renders you what is called an accessory, and that is a capital crime. You know the law, sir," he continued, turning to Beauchamp, and speaking in an authoritative tone, "and if I am not mistaken, this comes under the statute of limitations as a clear case of misprison, which under the old law was merely burning in the hand and transportation for life, but is now hanging matter. You had better think over the business, my man, and let me have an immediate answer with due deliberation, for you are not a person, I should think, to put your head in a halter, and if you were, I should not advise you to do so in this case."

"Thank you, sir," said the post-boy, "I won't; but I don't know the gemmen as showed

themselves such rum customers, nor him either as you are a axing arter."

"It is in vain, I fear," said Beauchamp to his companion, in a very low voice, as their respondent made this very definite answer; "the magistrates may perhaps obtain some further information from him when he finds that the matter is serious, but we shall not."

The post-boy caught a few of the words apparently, and perhaps it was intended that he should do so, but they were without effect; and when at length they walked away baffled, he twisted the eyelid into a sort of wreath round his left eye, observing, with his tongue in his cheek, "Ay, ay, my covies—no go!"

Ned Hayward opened the door somewhat suddenly, and as he went out, he almost tumbled over the little humpbacked pot-boy. Now whether the young gentleman—his years might be nineteen or twenty, though his stature was that of a child of eight—came thither to replenish the tankard he had previously brought, or whether he affected the moonlight, or was fond of conversation in which he did not take

a part, Ned Hayward could not at the moment divine; but before he and Beauchamp had taken a dozen steps up the yard, Hayward felt a gentle pull at his coat-tail.

"What is it, my lad?" he said, looking down upon the pot-boy, and at the same time stooping his head as if with a full impression that his ears at their actual height could hear nothing that proceeded from a point so much below as the deformed youth's mouth.

Instantly a small high-pitched but very musical voice replied, "I'll come for your boots early to-morrow, sir, and tell you all about it."

"Can't you tell me, now?" asked the young gentleman; "I am going into the stable to see my horse, and you can say your say there, my man."

"I daren't," answered the pot-boy; "there's Tim the Ostler, and Jack Millman's groom, and Long Billy, the Taunton post-boy, all about. I'll come to-morrow and fetch your boots."

At the same moment the landlord's voice, exclaiming in sharp tones, "Billy! Billy Lamb!

—what the devil are you so long about?" was heard, and the pot-boy ran off as fast as his long thin legs would carry him.

"Well, this affair promises some amusement," said Ned Hayward, when they had again reached the little parlour, which in his good-humoured easy way he now looked upon as common to them both. "Upon my word, I am obliged to these highwaymen, or whatever the scoundrels may be, for giving me something fresh to think of. Although at good Sir John Slingsby's I shall have fishing enough, I dare say, yet one cannot fish all day and every day, and sometimes one gets desperately bored in an old country house, unless fate strikes out something not quite in the common way to occupy one."

"Did you ever try falling in love?" asked Beauchamp, with a quiet smile, as he glanced his eyes over the fine form and handsome features of his companion; "it is an excellent pastime, I am told."

"No!" answered Ned Hayward, quickly and straightforwardly; "I never did, and

never shall. I am too poor, Mr. Beauchamp, to marry in my own class of society, and maintain my wife in the state which that class implies. I am too honest to make love without intending to marry; too wise, I trust, to fall in love where nothing could be the result but unhappiness to myself, if not to another also." He spoke these few sentences very seriously; but then, resuming at once his gay rattling manner, he went on: "Oh, I have drilled myself capitally, I assure you. At twenty I was like a raw recruit, bungling at every step; found myself saying all manner of sweet things to every pretty face I met; felt my heart beating whenever, under the pretty face, I thought I discovered something that would last longer. But I saw so much of love in a cottage and its results, that, after calculating well what a woman brought up in good society would have to sacrifice who married a man with 600*l.* a-year, I voted it unfair to ask her, and made up my mind to my conduct. As soon as ever I find that I wish to dance with any dear girl twice in a night, and

fall into reveries when I think of her, and feel a sort of warm blood at my fingers' ends when my hand touches, I am off like a hair trigger ; for if a man is bound to act with honour to other men, who can make him if he does not willingly, he is ten times more strongly bound to do so towards women, who can neither defend nor avenge themselves."

With a sudden impulse Beauchamp held out his hand to him, and shook his heartily ; and that grasp seemed to say, " I know you now to the heart. We are friends."

Ned Hayward was a little surprised at this enthusiastic burst of Mr. Beauchamp, for he had set him down for what is generally called a very gentlemanlike person, which means, in the common parlance of the world, a man who has either used up everything like warm feeling, or has never possessed it, and who, not being troubled with any emotions, suffers polite manners and conventional habits to rule him in and out. With his usual rapid way of jumping at conclusions—which he often found very convenient, though, to say the truth, he

sometimes jumped over the right ones—he said to himself at once, “ Well, this is really a good fellow, I do believe, and a man of some heart and soul.”

But though Beauchamp’s warm shake of the hand had led him to this conviction, and he thought he began to understand him, yet Ned Hayward was a little curious as to a question which his new friend had asked him some time before. He had answered it, it is true, by telling him that he took care not to fall in love ; but he fancied that Mr. Beauchamp had inquired in a peculiar tone, and that he must have had some meaning more than the words implied, taken in their simple and straightforward application.

“ Come now, tell me, Beauchamp,” he said, after just five seconds’ consideration, “ what made you ask if I had ever tried falling in love by way of amusement ? Did you ever hear any story of my being guilty of such practices ? If you have, it was no true one—at least, for six or seven years past.”

“ Oh, no !” replied Beauchamp, laughing ; “ I

have had no means of learning your secret history. I only inquired because, if you have never tried that pleasant amusement, you will soon have a capital opportunity. Sir John Slingsby's daughter is one of the loveliest girls I ever saw."

"What, old Jack with a daughter!" exclaimed Ned Hayward, and then added, after a moment's thought—"By the way, so he had. I remember her coming to see him at his quarters. I had forgotten all about it. A pretty little girl she was; I think five or six years old. Let me see, she must be about sixteen or seventeen now; for that is just eleven years ago, when I was an ensign."

"She is more than that," answered Beauchamp, "by two or three years; and either it must be longer since you saw her, or——"

"Oh, no; it is just eleven years ago!" cried Captain Hayward; "eleven years, next month, for I was then seventeen myself."

"Well, then she must have been older than you thought," replied his companion.

"Very likely," said Ned Hayward. "I

never could tell girls' ages, especially when they are children. But there is no fear of my falling in love with her, if she is what you tell me. I never fell in love with a beautiful woman in my life—I don't like them; they are always either pert, or conceited, or vain, or haughty, or foolish. Sooner or later they are sure to find some ass to tell them how beautiful they are, and then they think that is quite sufficient for all the purposes of life."

"Perhaps because they are first impressed with a wrong notion of the purposes of life," answered Beauchamp; "but yet I never heard of a man before who objected to a woman because she was pretty."

"No, no," answered Ned Hayward, "that is a very different thing. I did not say pretty. I am very fond of what is pretty. Oh, the very word is delightful! It gives one such a nice, good-humoured, comfortable idea; it is full of health, and youth, and good spirits, and light-heartedness—the word seems to smile and speak content; and when it is the expression that is spoken of, and not the mere features, it

is very charming indeed. But a beautiful woman is a very different thing. I would as soon marry the Venus de Medicis, pedestal and all, as what is usually called a beautiful woman. But now let us talk of this other affair. I wonder what will come of my mysterious pot-boy !”

“Why, I doubt not you will obtain some information regarding the gentleman calling himself Wolf,” replied Beauchamp ; “but if you do, how do you intend to proceed ?”

“Hunt him down as I would a wolf,” answered Ned Hayward.

“Then, pray let me share the sport,” rejoined Beauchamp.

“Oh ! certainly, certainly,” said Ned Hayward ; “I’ll give the view halloo as soon as I have found him ; and so now, good night, for I am somewhat sleepy.”

“Good night, good night !” answered Beauchamp ; and Ned Hayward rang for a bed-candle, a boot-jack, a pair of slippers, and sundry other things that he wanted, which were brought instantly, and with great good

will. Had he asked for a night-cap it would have been provided with the same alacrity ; for those were days in which night-caps were furnished by every host to every guest: though now (alas ! for the good old times) no landlord ever thinks that a guest will stay long enough in his house to make it worth while to attend to his head-gear. But Ned Hayward needed no night-cap, for he never wore one, and therefore his demands did not at all overtax his host's stock.

CHAPTER V.

It was just in the gray of the morning, and the silver light of dawn was stealing through the deep glens of the wood, brightening the dewy filaments which busy insects had spun across and across the grass, and shining in long, glistening lines, upon the broad clear stream. It was a lovely stream as ever the eye of meditation rested on, or thoughtful angler walked beside; and from about ten miles beyond Slingsby Park to within half a mile of the small town of Tarningham, it presented an infinite variety of quiet English scenery, such as does the heart of man good to look upon. In one part it was surrounded by high hills, not

unbroken by jagged rocks and lofty banks, and went on tumbling in miniature cascades and tiny rapids. At another place it flowed on in greater tranquillity through green meadows, flanked on either hand by tall, stately trees, at the distance of eighty or ninety yards from the banks; not in trim rows, all ranged like rank and file upon parade, but straggling out as chance or taste had decided, sometimes grouping into masses, sometimes protruding far towards the stream, sometimes receding coyly into the opening of a little dell. Then, again, the river dashed on at a more hurried rate through a low copse, brawling as it went over innumerable shelves of rock and masses of stone, or banks of gravel, which attempted to obstruct its course; and nearer still to the town it flowed through turfy banks, slowly and quietly, every now and then diversified by a dashing ripple over a shallow, and a tumble into a deep pool.

It was in the gray of the morning, then, that a man in a velveteen jacket was seen walking slowly along by the margin, at a spot where

the river was in a sort of middle state, neither so fierce and restive as it seemed amongst the hills, nor so tranquil and sluggish as in the neighbourhood of the little town. There were green fields around; and numerous trees and copses, approaching sometimes very close to the water, but sometimes breaking away to a considerable distance, but generally far enough off for the angler to throw a fly without hooking the branches around. Amongst some elms, and walnuts, and Huntingdon poplars on the right bank, was an old square tower of very rough stone, gray and cold-looking, with some ivy up one side, clustering round the glassless window. It might have been mistaken for the ruin of some ancient castle of no great extent, had it not been for the axletree and some of the spokes and fellies of a dilapidated water-wheel projecting over the river, and at once announcing for what purpose the building had been formerly used, and that they had long ceased. There was still a little causeway and small stone bridge of a single arch spanning a rivulet that here and there joined the stream,

and from a door-way near the wheel still stretched a frail plank to the other side of the dam, which, being principally constructed of rude layers of rock, remained entire, and kept up the water so as to form an artificial cascade. Early as was the hour, some matutinal trout, who, having risen by times, and perhaps taken a long swim before breakfast, felt hungry and sharpset, were attempting to satisfy their voracious maws by snapping at a number of fawn-coloured moths which imprudently trusted themselves too near the surface of the water. The religious birds were singing their sweet hymns all around, and a large goatsucker whirled by on his long wings, depriving the trout of many a delicate fly before it came within reach of the greedy jaws that were waiting for it below the ripple.

But what was the man doing, while fish, flies, and birds were thus engaged? Marry, he was engaged in a very curious and mysterious occupation. With a slow step and a careful eye fixed upon the glassy surface beneath him, he walked along the course of the

current, down towards the park paling that you see there upon the left. Was he admiring the speckled tenants of the river? Was he admiring his own reflected image on the shining mirror of the stream? He might be doing either or both; but, nevertheless, he often put his finger and thumb into the pocket of a striped waistcoat, and pulled out some small round balls, about the size of a pea or a little larger, marvellously like one of those boluses which doctors are sometimes fain to prescribe, and chemists right willing to furnish, but which patients find it somewhat difficult to swallow. These he dropped one by one into the water, wherever he found a quiet place, and thus proceeded till he had come within about three hundred yards of the park wall. There he stopped the administration of these pills; and then, walking a little further, sat down by the side of the river, in the very midst of a tall clump of rushes.

In a minute or two something white, about the length of eighteen inches, floated down; and instantly stretching forth a long hooked

stick, our friend drew dexterously in to the shore a fine large trout of a pound and a half in weight. The poor fellow was quite dead, or at least so insensible that he did not seem at all surprised or annoyed to find himself suddenly out of his element, and into another gentleman's pocket, though the transition was somewhat marvellous, from the fresh, clear stream to a piece of glazed buckram. Most people would have disliked the change, but Mister Trout was in that sort of state that he did not care about anything. Hardly was he thus deposited when one of his finny companions—perhaps his own brother, or some other near relation—was seen coming down the stream with his stomach upwards, a sort of position which, to a trout, is the same as standing on the head would be to a human being. This one was nearer the bank; and first he hit his nose against a stump of tree; then, whirling quietly round, he tried the current tail foremost; but it was all of no avail, he found his way, likewise, into the pocket, and two more were easily consigned to the same

receptacle, all of them showing the same placid equanimity. At length, one very fine fish, which seemed to weigh two pounds and a half at the least, followed advice, and took a middle course. He was out of reach of the stick; the water was too deep at that spot to wade, and what was our friend of the pocket to do? He watched the fish carried slowly down the stream towards the place where the river passed under an archway into Sir John Slingsby's park. It was fat and fair, and its fins were rosy as if the morning sun had tinged them. Its belly was of a glossy white, with a kindly look about its half-expanded gills, that quite won our friend's affection. Yet he hesitated; and being a natural philosopher, he knew that by displacing the atoms of water the floating body might be brought nearer to the shore. He therefore tried a stone: but whether he threw it too far, or not far enough, I cannot tell; certain it is, the trout was driven further away than before, and to his inexpressible disappointment, he saw it carried through the arch. He was resolved, however, that it should not thus escape

him. Difficult circumstances try, if they do not make, great men; and taking a little run, he vaulted over the park paling and into the park.

He was just in the act of getting over again—perhaps feeling if he stayed too long it might be considered an intrusion—and had the fish in his hand, so that his movements were somewhat embarrassed, when a little incident occurred which considerably affected his plans and purposes for the day.

I have mentioned an old mill, and sundry trees and bushes at different distances from the bank, breaking the soft green meadow turf in a very picturesque manner. In the present instance, those various objects proved not only ornamental but useful—at least to a personage who had been upon the spot nearly as long as our friend in the velveteen jacket. That personage had been tempted into the mill either by its curious and ancient aspect, or by the open door, or by surprise, or by some other circumstance or motive; and once in, he thought he might as well look out of the win-

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dow. When he did look out of the window, the first thing his eyes fell upon was the first-mentioned gentleman dropping his pills into the water; and there being something curious and interesting in the whole proceeding, the man in the mill watched the man by the river for some minutes. He then quietly slipped out, and as the door was on the opposite side from that on which the operations I have described were going on, he did so unperceived. It would seem that the watcher became much affected by what he saw, for the next minute he glided softly over the turf behind a bush, and thence to a clump of trees, and then to a single old oak, with a good wide trunk—rather hollow, and somewhat shattered about the branches, but still with two or three of the lower boughs left, having a fair show of leaves, like a fringe of curly hair round the poll of some bald Anacreon. From that he went to another, and so on; in fact, dodging our first friend all the way down, till the four first trout were pocketed, and the fifth took its course into the park. When the betrayer of these

tender innocents, however, vaulted over the paling in pursuit, the dodger came out and got behind some bushes—brambles, and other similar shrubs, which have occasionally other uses than bearing blackberries; and no sooner did he see the successful chaser of the trout, with his goodly fish in his hand, and one leg over the paling, about to return to the open country, than taking two steps forward, he laid his hand upon his collar, and courteously helped him over somewhat faster than he would have come without such assistance.

The man of fishes had his back to his new companion at the moment when he received such unexpected support; but as soon as his feet touched the ground on the other side, he struggled most unreasonably to free his collar from the grasp that still retained it. He did not succeed in this effort; far from it; for he well-nigh strangled himself in the attempt to get out of that iron clutch; but nevertheless, he contrived, at the risk of suffocation, to bring himself face to face with his tenacious friend, and beheld, certainly what he did not expect

to see. No form of grim and grisly game-keeper was before him; no shooting-jacket and leathern leggings; but a person in the garb of a gentleman of good station, furnished with arms, legs, and chest of dimensions and materials which seemed to show that a combat would neither be a very safe nor pleasant affair.

"Who the devil are you?" asked the lover of trout, in the same terms which Mr. Wittingham had used the night before to the very same personage.

"Ha, ha, my friend!" exclaimed Ned Hayward; "so you have been hocussing the trout, have you?" And there they stood for a few minutes, without any answers to either question.

CHAPTER VI.

OF all the turnings and windings in this crooked life, one of the most disagreeable is turning back; and yet it is one we are all doomed to from childhood to old age. We are turned back with the smaller and the greater lessons of life, and have, alas, but too often, in our obstinacy or our stupidity, to learn them over and over again! I with the rest of my herd must also turn back from time to time; but on the present occasion it shall not be for a long way.

We have seen our good friend, Ned Hayward, lay his hand stoutly on the collar of a gentleman who had been taking some unwar-

rantable liberties with the finny fair ones of the stream; but the question is, how happened Ned Hayward to be there at that particular hour of the morning? Was he so exceedingly matutinal in his habits as to be usually up, dressed, and out and walking by a piece of water at a period of the day when most things except birds, fish, and poachers, are in their beds? Had he been roused at that hour by heartache, or headache, or any other ache? Was he gouty and could not sleep—in love, and not inclined to sleep? No, reader—no. He was an early man in his habits, it is true, for he was in high health and spirits, and with a busy and active mind, which looked upon slumber as time thrown away; but then though he rose early he was always careful as to his dress. He had a stiff beard, which required a good deal of shaving; his hair took him a long time, for he liked it to be exceedingly clean and glossy. Smooth he could not make it, for that the curls prevented—curls being obstinate things, and resolved to have their own way. Thus, with one thing or another, sometimes

reading scraps of a book that lay upon his dressing-table, sometimes looking out of window, and thinking more poetically than he had any notion of, sometimes cleaning his teeth till they looked as white and as straight as the keys of a new pianoforte, sometimes playing a tune with his fingers on the top of the table, and musing philosophically the while, it was generally at least one hour and a half from the time he arose before he issued forth into the world.

This was not always the case, indeed; for on May mornings, when the trout rise—in August, if he were near the moors—on the first of September, wherever he might be, for he was never at that season in London—he usually abridged his toilet, and might be seen in the green fields, duly equipped for the sport of the season, very shortly after daybreak.

“On the present occasion, and the morning of which I have just spoken, there cannot be the slightest doubt that he would have lain in bed somewhat longer than usual, for he had had a long ride the day before, some excite-

ment, and a good supper; but there was one little circumstance which roused him and sent him forth. At about a quarter before five, he heard his door open, and a noise made amongst the boots and shoes. He was in that sleepy state in which the events of even five or six hours before are vague and indefinite, if recollected at all; and although he had some confused notion of having ordered himself to be called early, yet he knew not the why or the wherefore, and internally concluded that it was one of the servants of the inn come to take his clothes away for the purpose of brushing them. He thought, as that was a process with which he had nothing to do, he might as well turn on his other side, and sleep it out. Still, however, there was a noise in the room, which in the end disturbed him, and he gave over all the boots, physical or metaphysical, to the devil. Then raising himself upon his elbow, he looked about, and by the dim light which was streaming through the dimity curtains—for the window was unfurnished with shutters—he saw a figure somewhat like that of a large goose

wandering about amidst the fragments of his apparel.

"What in the mischief's name are you about?" asked Ned Hayward, impatiently. "Can't you take the things and get along?"

"It's me, sir," said the low, sweet-toned voice of the humpbacked pot-boy, who had not a perfect certainty in his own mind that neuter verbs are followed by a nominative case; "you were wishing to know last night about——"

"Ah, hang it, so I was!" exclaimed Ned Hayward; "but I had forgotten all about it. Well, my man, what can you tell me about this fellow—this Wolf? Where does he live—how can one get at him? None of the people here will own they know anything about him, but I believe they are lying, and I am very sure of it. The name's a remarkable one, and not to be mistaken."

"Ay, sir," answered the pot-boy, "they knew well enough whom you want, though you did not mention the name they chose to know him by. Wolf's a cant name, you see, which he got on account of his walking about

so much at night, as they say wolves do, though I never saw one."

"Well, where is he to be found?" asked Ned Hayward, in his usual rapid manner, and he then added, to smooth down all difficulties, "I don't want to do the man any harm, for I have a notion, somehow, that he is but a tool in the business; and therefore, although I could doubtless find him out sooner or later, and deal with him as I think fit, yet I would rather have his address privately, that I may go and talk to him alone."

"Ah, sir, he may be a tool," answered the pot-boy, "but he's an awkward tool to work with. I could tell you something about him, if I were quite sure you did not intend him any harm, because he is not a bad fellow at heart, sir."

"I do not intend to harm him, upon my honour," replied Ned Hayward; "and you may trust me safely, my man."

"I am sure I can, sir," answered the lad. "You do not look like one to harm a poor fellow. Well, if you had asked the people for

Ste Gimlet, they'd have been obliged to answer; for they can't deny having heard of *him*."

"But where does he live? How am I to find him?" asked Ned Hayward.

"That's not quite so easy, sir," replied the hunchback, "for he wanders about a good deal, but he has got a place where he says he lives on Yaldon Moor, behind the park; and that he's there some time in every day is certain. I should think the morning as good a time as any, and you may catch him on the look-out if you go round by the back of the park, and then up the river by the old mill. There's an overgo a little higher up, and I shouldn't wonder if he were dabbling about in the water; for it isn't the time for partridges or hares, and he must be doing something."

"But what sort of a place has he on the moor?" asked Ned Hayward, beginning to get more and more interested in the pursuit of his inquiries; "how can I find it, my man?"

"It's not easy," answered his companion, "for it's built down in the pit. However, when you have crossed by the overgo, you will find

a little path just before you, and if you go along that straight, without either turning to the right or the left, it will lead you right up to the moor. Then I'm sure I don't know how to direct you, for the roads go turning about in all manner of ways."

"Is it east, west, north, or south?" asked Captain Hayward, impatiently.

"Why, east," answered the boy; "and I dare say, if you go soon, you will find the sun just peeping out over the moor in that direction. It's a pretty sight, and I've looked at it often, to see the sunshine come streaming through the morning mist, and making all the green things that grow about there look like gold and purple; and very often, too, I've seen the blue smoke coming up out of the pit from Ste's cottage-chimney. Perhaps it may be so when you go, and then you'll easily find it."

"And whose park is it you speak of, boy?" said Ned Hayward. "There may be half-a-dozen about here."

"Why, Sir John Slingsby's," answered the boy; "that's the only one we call the Park about here."

“Oh, then, I know it,” rejoined the gentleman, stretching out his hand at the same time, and taking his purse from a chair that stood by his bedside; “there’s a crown for you; and now carry off the boots and clothes, and get them brushed as fast as possible.”

The boy did as he was told, took the crown with many thanks, gathered together the various articles of apparel which lay scattered about, and retired from the room. Ned Hayward, however, without waiting for his return, jumped out of bed, drew forth from one of his portmanteaus another complete suit of clothes, plunged his head, hands, and neck in cold water, and then mentally saying, “I will shave when I come back; there is no use of wakening Beauchamp,” he dressed himself in haste, and looked out for a moment into the yard, to see whether many of the members of the household were astir. There was a man at the very further end of the yard cleaning a horse, and just under the window, the little deformed pot-boy, whistling a plaintive air with the most exquisite taste, while he was brushing a coat and

waistcoat. The finest and most beautiful player on the flageolet, never equalled the tones that were issuing from his little pale lips, and Ned Hayward could not refrain from pausing a moment to listen; but then putting on his hat, he hurried down stairs, and beckoned the boy towards him.

“Do not say that I am out, my man, unless any questions are asked,” he said; “and when you have brushed the clothes, put them on a chair at the door.”

The boy nodded significantly; and our friend, Ned Hayward, took his way out of the town in the direction which the boy had indicated. Of all the various bumps in the human head, the bump of locality is the foremost. This book, the reader is well aware, is [merely a phrenological essay in a new form. So the bump of locality is the most capricious, whimsical, irrational, unaccountable, perverse, and unmanageable of all bumps. To some men it affords a faculty of finding their way about houses—I wish to Heaven it did so with me, for I am always getting into wrong rooms and places

where I have no business—others it enables to go through all sorts of tortuous paths and ways almost by intuition; with others it is strong regarding government offices, and the places connected therewith; but in Ned Hayward it was powerful in the country, and it would have been a very vigorous *ignis fatuus* indeed that would lead him astray either on horseback or on foot. Three words of direction generally sufficed—if they were clear, and he was as sure of his journey as if he knew every step of the way. There might be a little calculation in the thing—a sort of latent argumentation—for no one knew better that if a place lay due north, the best way to arrive at it was not to go due south, or was more clearly aware that in ordinary circumstances, the way into the valley was not to climb the hill; but Ned Hayward was rarely disposed to analyse any process in his own mind. He had always hated dissected puzzles even in his boyhood; and as his mind was a very good mind, he generally let it take its own way, without troubling it with questions. Thus he walked straight on

out of the little town, along the bank of the river, and finding himself interrupted, after about three miles, by the park wall, he took a path through the fields to the left, then struck back again to the right, and soon after had a glimpse of the river again above its passage through Sir John Slingsby's park.

All this time, Ned Hayward's mind was not unoccupied. He saw everything that was passing about him, and meditated upon it without knowing that he was meditating. The sky was still quite gray when he set out ; but presently the morning began to hang out her banners of purple and gold to welcome the monarch of day ; and Ned Hayward said to himself, " How wonderfully beautiful all this is, and what a fine ordination is it that every change in nature should produce some variety of beauty !" Then he remarked upon the trees, and the birds, and the meadows, and the reflections of the sky in a clear, smooth part of the river, and with somewhat of a painter's mind, perceived the beautiful harmony that is produced by the effect which one colour has upon another by its side.

And then he passed a little village church, with the steeple shrouded in ivy; and it filled his mind full of quiet and peaceful images, and simple rural life (with a moral to it all), and his thoughts ran on to a thousand scenes of honest happiness, till he had the game at skittles, and the maypole on the green before him as plain as if it were all real; and the ivy and two old yews carried him away to early times when that ancient church was new. Heaven knows how far his fancy went galloping!—through the whole history of England, at least. But all these reveries went out of his head almost as soon as the objects that excited them; and then, as he went through some neat hedges and pleasant corn-fields, which promised well in their green freshness for an abundant harvest, he began to think of partridges and an occasional pheasant lying under a holly-bush, and pointing dogs and tumbling birds, a full game-bag, and a capital dinner, with a drowsy evening afterwards. Good Heavens! what a thing it is to be young, and in high health, and in high spirits!—how easy the load of life sits

upon one!—how insignificant are its cares to its enjoyments!—every moment has its flitting dream; every hour its becoming enjoyment, if we choose to seek it; every flower, be it bitter or be it sweet, be it inodorous or be it perfumed, has its nectary full of honeyed drops, ripe for the lip that will vouchsafe to press it. But years, years, they bring on the autumn of the heart, when the bright and blooming petals have passed away, when the dreams have vanished with the light slumbers of early years, and everything is in the seed for generations to come; we feel ourselves the husks of the earth, and find that it is time to fall off, and give place to the bloom and blossom of another epoch.

Our friend, however, if not in the budding time of life, had nothing of the sere and yellow leaf about him. He was one of those men who are calculated to carry on the day-dream of boyhood, even beyond its legitimate limit; nothing fretted him, nothing wore him, few things grieved him. It required the diamond point to make a deep impression, and though

he reflected the lights that fell upon him from other objects, it was but the more powerful rays that penetrated into the depth, and that not very frequently. Thus on he went upon his way, and what he had got to after partridges and pheasants, and matters of such kind, Heaven only knows ! He might be up in the moon for aught I can tell, or in the Indies, or riding astride upon a comet, or in any other position the least likely for a man to place himself in except when aided by the wings of imagination ; and yet, strange to say, Ned Hayward had not the slightest idea that he had any imagination at all ! He believed himself to be the most simple, jog-trot, matter-of-fact creature in all the world. But to return, he was indulging in all sorts of fantasies, just when a little path between two high hedges opened out upon a narrow meadow, by the side of the river, at a spot just opposite the old mill, and not more than forty or fifty yards distant from the door thereof. He saw the old mill and the stream, but saw nothing else, upon my word, and thinking to himself—

“What a picturesque ruin that is; it looks like some feudal castle built beside the water parting two hostile barons’ domains! What the deuce can it have been?”

Doubt with him always led to examination, so, without more ado, he crossed over the open space with his usual quick step, entered the mill, looked about him, satisfied himself in a minute as to what had been its destination, and then gazed out of the windows, first up the stream, and next down. Up the stream he saw some swallows skimming over the water, the first that summer had brought to our shores; and, moreover, a sedate heron, with its blue back appearing over some reeds, one leg in the water, and one raised to its breast. When he looked down, however, he perceived the gentleman I have described, dropping some pellets into the water, and he thought “That’s a curious operation. What can he be about?”

The next minute, however, the illegitimate wooer of the fishes turned his face partly towards the mill, and Ned Hayward murmured “Ah, ha, Master Wolf, *alias* Ste Gimlet, I have

you now, I think." And issuing forth, he dogged him down the bank as I have before described, till at length, choosing his moment dexterously, he grasped him by the collar, in such a manner, that if he had had the strength of Hercules, he would have found it a more difficult matter to escape, than to kill forty Hydras, or clean fifty Augean stables.

"Hocussing the fish!" said the prisoner, in answer to one of Captain Hayward's first intimations of what he thought of his proceedings. "I don't know what you mean by hocussing the fish—I've got a few dead 'uns out of the river—that's all; and no great harm, I should think, just to make a fry."

"Ay, my good friend," replied Ned Hayward, "dead enough, I dare say they were when you got them; but I'm afraid we must have a coroner's inquest upon them, and I do not think the verdict will be 'Found drowned.' What I mean, my man, is, that you have poisoned them—a cunning trick, but one that I know as well as your name or my own."

"And what the devil is your name?" asked

the captive, trying to twist himself round, so as at least to get a blow or a kick at his captor.

"Be quiet—be quiet!" answered Ned Hayward, half strangling him in his collar. "My name is my own property, and I certainly will not give it to you; but your own you shall have, if you like. You are called Ste Gimlet, or I am mistaken, but better known at night by the name of Wolf."

The man muttered an angry growl, and Ned Hayward continued,

"You see I know all about you; and, to tell you the truth, I was looking for you."

"Ah, so he's had some 'un down from London," said Wolf, entirely mistaking the nature of Captain Hayward's rank and avocation. "Well, so help me——, if ever I did this on his ground afore, sir."

"Well, Master Gimlet," answered Ned Hayward, perfectly understanding what was passing in the man's mind, and willing to encourage the mistake, "I have been asked down certainly, and I suppose I must take you before Sir John Slingsby at once—unless, indeed,

you like to make the matter up one way or another."

"I haven't got a single crown in the world," answered the poacher; "if you know all, you'd know that I am poor enough."

"Ay, but there are more ways than one of making matters up," rejoined Ned Hayward, in a meaning tone. "You know a little bit of business you were about last night."

The man's face turned as white as a sheet, and his limbs trembled as if he had been in the cold fit of an ague. All his strength was gone in a moment, and he was as powerless as a baby.

"Why," faltered he, at length, "you could not be sent for that affair, for there's not been time."

"No, certainly," replied the young gentleman; "but having been asked down here on other matters, I have just taken that up, and may go through with it or not, just as it suits me. Now you see, Ste," he continued, endeavouring to assume, as well as he could, somewhat of the Bow-street officer tone, and doing so quite sufficiently to effect his object

with a country delinquent, "a nod, you know, is quite as good as a wink to a blind horse."

"Ay, ay, I understand, sir," answered Mr. Gimlet.

"Well, then," continued Ned Hayward, "I understand, too; and being quite sure that you are not what we call the principal in this business, but only an accessory, I am willing to give you a chance."

"Thank'ee, sir," replied Wolf, in a meditative tone, but he said no more; and his captor, who wished him to speak voluntarily, was somewhat disappointed.

"You are mighty dull, Master Wolf," said Ned Hayward, "and therefore I must ask you just as plain a question as the judge does when he has got the black cap in his hand ready to put on. Have you anything to say why I should not take you at once before Sir John Slingsby?"

"Why, what the devil should I say?" rejoined the man, impatiently. "If you know me, I dare say you know the others, and if you're so cunning, you must guess very well that it was

not money that we were after ; so that it can't be no felony, after all."

"If it is not a felony, it is not worth my while to meddle with," answered Ned Hayward, "but there may be different opinions upon that subject ; and if you like to tell me all about it, I shall be able to judge. I guessed it was not for money ; but there is many a thing as bad as that. I don't ask you to speak, but you may if you like. If you don't, come along."

"Well, I'll speak all I know," answered Wolf ; "that's to say, if you'll just let me get breath, for, hang me if your grip does not half strangle me. I'll not mention names though, for I won't peach ; but just to show you that there was nothing so very wrong, I'll tell you what it was all about—that's to say, if you'll let me off about these devils of fish."

"Agreed as to the fish," replied Ned Hayward, "if you tell the truth. I don't want to throttle you either, my good friend ; but mark me well, if I let go my hold, and you attempt to bolt, I will knock you down, and have you before a magistrate in five minutes. Sit down

there on the bank, then." And without loosening his grasp, he forced his prisoner to bend his knees and take up a position before him, from which it would not have been possible to rise without encountering a blow from a very powerful fist. When this was accomplished, he let the man's collar go, and standing directly opposite, bade him proceed.

This seemed not so easy a task as might have been imagined, at least to our friend Mr. Gimlet, who, not being a practised orator, wanted the art of saying as much as possible upon everything unimportant, and as little as possible upon everything important. He scratched his head heartily, however, and that stimulus at length enabled him to produce the following sentence.

"Well, you see, sir, it was nothing at all but a bit of love-making."

"It did not look like it," answered Ned Hayward.

"Well, it was, though," said Mr. Gimlet, in a decided tone. "The young gentleman, whom I'm talking of, wanted to get the young

lady away; for you see her mother looks very sharp after her, and so he had a chaise ready, and me and another to help him; and if those two fellows had not come up just as we were about it, he'd have had her half way to Scotland by this time."

"And where is the young gentleman, as you call him, now?" asked Ned Hayward, in that sort of quiet, easy tone, in which people sometimes put questions, which, if considered seriously, would be the least likely to receive an answer.

But his companion was upon his guard. "That's neither here nor there," he replied.

"It is, I can assure you, my good friend Wolf," said the young gentleman; "for whatever you may think, this was just as much a felony as if you had taken a purse or cut a throat. Two pistols were fired, I think—the young lady is an heiress; and forcibly carrying away an heiress, is as bad as a robbery; it is a sort of picking her pocket of herself. So, if you have a mind to escape a noose, you'll instantly tell me where he is."

The man thrust his hands into his pockets, and gazed at his interrogator with a sullen face, in which fear might be seen struggling with dogged resolution; but Ned Hayward the moment after, added as a sort of rider to his bill,

"I dare say he is some low fellow who did it for her money."

"No, that he's not, by ——!" cried the other. "He's a gentleman's son, and a devilish rich one's, too."

"Ah ha! Mr. Wittingham's!" cried Ned Hayward; "now I understand you," and he laughed with his peculiar clear, merry laugh, which made Mr. Gimlet at first angry, and then inclined to join him. "And now, my good friend," continued Ned Hayward, laying his hand upon his companion's shoulder, "you may get up, and be off. You've made a great blunder, and mistaken me for a very respectable sort of functionary, upon whose peculiar province I have no inclination to trespass any further—I mean a thief-taker. If you will take my advice, however, neither you nor Mr. Wit-

tingham will play such tricks again, for if you do, you may fare worse; and you may as well leave off hocussing trout, snaring pheasants and hares, and shooting partridges on the sly, and take to some more legitimate occupation. You would make a very good gamekeeper, I dare say, upon the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief; and some of these days I will come up to your place upon the moor, and have a chat with you about it; I doubt not you could show me some sport with otters, or badgers, or things of that kind."

"Upon my soul and body, you're a cool hand!" cried Ste Gimlet, rising and looking at Captain Hayward, as if he did not well know whether to knock him down or not.

"I am," answered our friend Ned, with a calm smile, "quite cool, and always cool, as you'll find when you know me better. As to what has passed to-day I shall take no notice of this fish affair; and in regard to Mr. Wittingham's proceedings last night, I shall deliberate a little before I act. You'd better tell him so when you next see him, just to keep

him on his good behaviour; and so good morning to you, my friend."

Thus saying, Ned Hayward turned away, and walked towards the town, without once looking to see whether his late prisoner was or was not about to hit him a blow on the head. Perhaps had he known what was passing in worthy Mr. Gimlet's mind, he might have taken some precaution; for certainly that gentleman was considerably moved; but if the good and the bad spirit had a struggle together in his breast, the good got the better at length, and he exclaimed, "No, hang it, I won't!" and with a slow and thoughtful step he walked up the stream again, towards the path which led to the moor.

Upon that path I shall leave him, and begging the reader to get upon any favourite horse he may have in the stable—hobby or not hobby—canter gaily back again to take up some friends we have left far behind.

CHAPTER VII.

THE reader may remember that we left a lady and her daughter, whom Ned Hayward afterwards discovered to be a Mrs. and Miss Clifford, standing at the door of Sir John Slingsby's house, in the heart of what was called Tarningham Park. All that Ned Hayward (or the reader either) knew of their history at the moment that he quitted them, after having assisted them to alight from their carriage, was as follows: that the elder lady had been sent for to see her elder brother in his last moments, he having been accused of having gout in the stomach, and that she and her

daughter had been stopped on the king's highway by three personages, two of whom, at least, had pistols with them; that they had been rescued by Captain Hayward himself, and another gentleman; that on arriving at Tarningham House it did not look at all like the dwelling of a dying man, and that the answer of the butler to Mrs. Clifford's inquiries regarding her brother's health was, "Quite well, thank you, ma'am," delivered in the most commonplace tone in the world.

At the precise point of time when this reply was made, Ned Hayward took his leave, remounted his horse, and rode back to Tarningham; and after he was gone, Mrs. Clifford remained for at least thirty seconds somewhat bewildered with what seemed to her a very strange announcement. When she had done being bewildered, and seemed to have got a slight glimpse of the real state of the case, she turned an anxious glance to her daughter, to which Miss Clifford, who fully understood what it meant, replied at once, without requiring to have it put into words: "You had better go in,

dear mamma," she said; "it will grieve poor Isabella if you do not; and besides, it might be risking a great deal to go back at night with nobody to protect us."

Mrs. Clifford still hesitated a little, but in the meantime some by-play had been going on which decided the question. The butler had called a footman; the footman had taken a portmanteau and some smaller packages from the boot of the carriage; the name of Mrs. Clifford had been mentioned once or twice; a lady's-maid crossing the hall had seen the two ladies' faces by the light of a great lamp; and in a moment after, from a door on the opposite side of the vestibule, came forth a fair and graceful figure, looking like Hebe dressed for dinner.

"Oh, my dear aunt!" she exclaimed, running across to Mrs. Clifford and kissing her, "and you, too, my dear Mary! This is indeed an unexpected pleasure; but come in—come into the drawing-room. They will bring in all the things. There is no one there," she continued, seeing her aunt hesitate a little; "I am quite

alone, and shall be for the next two hours, I dare say."

Mrs. Clifford suffered herself to be led on into a fine large old-fashioned drawing-room; and then began the explanations.

"And so, Isabella, you did not expect me to-night?" said the elder lady, addressing Hebe. "Either for jest or for mischief, some one has played us a trick. Have you got the letter, Mary?"

It was in Miss Clifford's writing-desk, however, as letters always are in some place where they cannot be found when they are wanted; but the fact was soon explained that Mrs. Clifford, that very day about four o'clock, had received a letter, purporting to come from the housekeeper at Tarningham House, informing her that her brother, Sir John Slingsby, had been suddenly seized with gout in the stomach, and was not expected to live from hour to hour; that Miss Slingsby was too much agitated to write; but that Sir John expressed an eager desire to see his sister before he died.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the fair Isabella,

“ who could have done such a thing as that ?” and then she laughed quietly, adding—“ well, at all events I am very much obliged to them ; but it was a shameful trick, notwithstanding.”

“ You haven’t heard the whole yet, Isabella,” replied Mrs. Clifford, “ for we have been stopped between this and Tarningham, and should have been robbed—perhaps murdered—if two gentlemen had not come up to our rescue. Good Heaven, it makes me feel quite faint to think of it.” And she sat down in one of the large arm-chairs, and put her hand to her head, while her cheek turned somewhat pale.

“ Take a little wine, my dear aunt,” cried Isabella ; and, before Mrs. Clifford could stop her, she had darted out of the room.

As soon as she was alone with her daughter, the widow lady gazed round the chamber in which she sat, with a thoughtful and melancholy look. She was in the house where her early days of girlhood had passed—she was in the very room whence she had gone, in all the agitation of happy love, as a bride to the altar.

She peopled the place with forms that could no longer be seen, she called up the loved and the dead, the parents who had cherished and instructed her, the fair sister who had bloomed and withered by her side. How many happy, how many a painful scene rose to the eye of memory, on that stage where they had been enacted ! All the material objects were the same—the pictures, the furniture, the old oak panelling, with its carved wreaths ; but where were they who moved so lately beside her in that chamber—where was all that had there been done ? The grave and the past—man's tomb, and the tomb of man's actions had received them, and in the short space of twenty years all had gone, fading away, and dissolving into air, like a smoke rising up unto heaven, and spreading out thinner and thinner, till nought remains. Herself and a brother, from whom many circumstances had detached her, were all that were left of the crowd of happy faces which remembrance called back as she sat there and gazed around. Some tears rose to her eyes, and Mary, who had been standing

by, gazing at her face, and reading in it with the quick appreciation of affection all the emotions which brought such shadows over the loved mother's brow, knelt down beside her, and taking her hand in hers, said earnestly, "Mamma, dear mamma, I know this is painful; but pray, for my sake and Isabella's, let the shameful deceit that has been played upon us produce a good and happy result. You are here in my uncle's house; be reconciled to him fully, I beseech you. You know that he is good-humoured, notwithstanding all his faults; and I cannot but think that if those who might have led him to better things, had not withdrawn from him so completely, he might now have been a different man."

Mrs. Clifford shook her head mournfully.

"My dear child," she said, "you know that it is not resentment; it was your good father who did not feel it consistent with his character and station to countenance all that takes place here."

"But for Isabella's sake," said Miss Clifford, earnestly; and before her mother could answer,

the young lady of whom she spoke re-entered the room, with a servant carrying some refreshments.

“Oh, dear aunt,” she said, while the wine and water and biscuits were placed upon a small table at Mrs. Clifford’s elbow, “it makes me so glad to see you, and I have ordered the blue room at the south side to be got ready for you directly, and then there is the corner one for Mary, because it has a window both ways, and when she is in a gay mood she can look out over the meadows and the stream, and when she is in her high pensiveness she can gaze over the deep woods and hills. Then she is next to me, too, so that she may have merry nonsense on one side, and grave sense on the other; for I am sure you will stay a long while with us now you are here, and papa will be so glad.”

“I fear it cannot be very long, my love,” replied Mrs. Clifford. “In the first place, I have come, it seems, uninvited; and in the next place, you know, Isabella, that I am sometimes out of spirits, and perhaps fastidious, so that

all guests do not at all times please me. Who have you here now? There seemed a large party in the dining-room."

"Oh, there are several very foolish men," answered Sir John Slingsby's daughter, laughing, "and one wise one. There is Mr. Dabbleworth, who was trying to prove to me all dinner-time that I am an electrical machine; and in the end, I told him I could easily believe he was one, for he certainly gave me a shock; and Sir James Vestage, who joined in, and insisted that instead of electrical machines men were merely improved monkeys. I told him that I perfectly agreed with him, and that I saw fresh proofs of it every day. Then up by papa was sitting old Mr. Harrington, the fox-hunter; what he was saying I do not know, for I never listen to anything he says, as it is sure either to be stupid or offensive. Then there was Charles Harrington, who lisped a good deal, and thought himself exceedingly pretty; and Mr. Wharton, the lawyer, who thought deeply and drank deeply, and said nothing but once."

"But who was your wise man, dear Isabella?" asked Mary, very willing to encourage her fair cousin in her light cheerfulness, hoping that it might win Mrs. Clifford gently from sadder thoughts.

"Oh, who but good Dr. Miles," answered Miss Slingsby, "who grumbled sadly at every body, and even papa did not escape, I can assure you. But all these people will be gone in an hour or two, and in the meantime I shall have you all alone."

"Then there is no one staying in the house, Isabella?" said Mrs. Clifford. "I heard at Tarningham that your father expected some people from London."

"Only one, I believe," answered the fair daughter of the house, "but he has not arrived yet, and perhaps may not. He is Captain Hayward, who was ensign in papa's regiment long ago. He was a gay, thoughtless, good-humoured lad at that time, I recollect; but I do not remember much about him, except that he was a gentleman, which some others in the regiment were not. Pray, pray, do stay, dear

aunt, till he is gone, for I know not what I should do with him in the house by myself. I positively must get papa to ask somebody else, or persuade the good doctor to come up and flirt with me to my heart's content, just as a diversion from the pleasures of this Captain Hayward's society."

"A very disagreeable person, I dare say," replied Mary Clifford.

But all further discussion was suddenly brought to an end by the door of the drawing-room being thrown open, and Sir John Slingsby rushing in.

Stay a moment, reader, and observe him before he advances. Honest Jack Slingsby! Roystering Sir John! Jolly old Jack! Glorious Johnny! By all these names was he known, or had been known, by persons in different degrees of acquaintanceship with him. That round and portly form, now extending the white waistcoat and black-silk breeches, had once been slim and graceful: that face, glowing with the grape in all its different hues, from the *œil de perdrix* upon the temples and forehead

to the deep purple of old port in the nose, had once been smooth and fair. That nose itself, raising itself now into mighty dominion over the rest of the face, and spreading out, Heaven knows where, over the map of his countenance, like the empire of Russia in the map of Europe, was once fine and chiselled like Apollo's own. That thin white hair, flaring up into a cockatoo on the top of his head, to cover the well-confirmed baldness, was once a mass of dark curls that would not have disgraced the brow of Jove. You may see the remains of former dandyism in the smart shoe, the tight silk stocking, the well cut blue coat; and you may imagine how much activity those limbs once possessed from the quick and buoyant step with which the capacious stomach is carried into the room. There is a jauntiness, too, in the step which would seem to imply that the portion of youthful vigour and activity which is undoubtedly gone has been parted from with regret, and that he would fain persuade himself and others that he still retains it in its full elasticity; but yet there is nothing affected

about it either, and perhaps after all it is merely an effort of the mind to overcome the approach of corporeal infirmity, and to carry on the war as well as may be. Look at the good-humoured smile, too, the buoyant, boisterous, overflowing satisfaction which is radiating from every point of that rosy countenance. Who on earth could be angry with him? One might be provoked, but angry one couldn't be. It is evidently the face of one who takes the world lightly—who esteems nothing as very heavy—retains no impressions very long—enjoys the hour and its pleasures to the very utmost—and has no great consciousness of sin or shame in anything that he does. He is, in fact, a fat butterfly, who, though he may have some difficulty in fluttering from flower to flower, does his best to sip the sweets of all he finds, and not very unsuccessfully.

With that same jaunty light step, with that same good-humoured, well-satisfied smile, Sir John Slingsby advanced straight to his sister, took her in his arms, gave her a hearty kiss, and shook both her hands, exclaiming, in a

round, full, juicy voice, almost as fat as himself,

“ Well, my dear Harriet, I’m very happy to see you ! This *is* kind, this is very kind indeed ; I could hardly believe my ears when the servants told me you were here ; but I left the fellows immediately, to fuddle their noses at leisure, and came to assure myself that it was a fact. And my dear Mary, too, my little saint, how are you, my dear girl ? ”

“ We were brought here, John,” replied Mrs. Clifford, “ by a very shameful trick.” And she proceeded to explain to him the trick which had been practised upon her.

“ Gout ! ” exclaimed Sir John, “ gout in the stomach ! It would be a devilish large gout to take up his abode in my stomach, or else he’d find the house too big for him ; ” and he laid his hand upon his large paunch with an air of pride and satisfaction. “ Gout ! that does not look like gout, I think,” and he stuck out his neat foot, and trim, well-shaped ankle ; “ never had but one threatening of a fit in my life, and then I cured it in an afternoon—with three bottles of Champagne and a glass of brandy,”

he added, in a sort of loud aside to Mary, as if she would enter into the joke better than her mother. "And so really, Harriet, you would not have come if you had not thought me dying. Come, come, now, forget and forgive. Let bygones be bygones. I know I am a great fool, and do a great many very silly things; but 'pon my soul I'm very sorry for it—I am indeed. You can't think how I abominate myself sometimes, and wonder what the devil possesses me. I'll repent and reform, upon my life I will, Harriet, if you'll just stay and help me—it's being left all alone to struggle with temptation that makes me fall so often: but every ten minutes I'm saying to myself, 'What an old fool you are, Jack Slingsby!' so now you'll stay, like a dear, good girl, as you always were, and help to make my house a little respectable. Forget and forgive—forget and forgive!"

"My dear John, I have nothing to forgive," answered Mrs. Clifford. "You know very well that I would do anything in the world to promote your welfare, and always wished it, but——"

“Ay, ay, it was your husband,” answered Sir John, bringing an instant cloud over his sister’s face. “Well, he was a good man—an excellent man—ay, and a kind man, too, and he was devilish right, after all; I can’t help saying it, though I suffer. In his station, what could he do? An archdeacon and then a dean, it was not to be expected that he should countenance rioting, and roaring, and drinking, and all that, as we used to do here; but ’pon my life, Harriet, I’ll put an end to it. Now you shall see, I won’t drink another glass to-night, and I’ll send all those fellows away within half an hour, by Jove! I’ll just go back and order coffee in the dining-room, and that’ll be a broad hint, you know. Bella will take care of you in the meantime, and I’ll be back in half an hour—high time I should reform, indeed—even that monkey begins to lecture me. I’ve got a capital fellow coming down to stay with me—the best fellow in the world—as gay as a lark, and as active as a squirrel; yet, somehow or other, he always kept himself right, and never played at cards, the dog, nor got drunk either,

that I ever saw; yet he must have got drunk, too—every man must, sometimes; but he kept it snug if he did. Make yourselves comfortable;” and without waiting to hear his sister’s further adventures on the road, Sir John Slingsby tripped out of the room again, and notwithstanding all his good resolutions, finished two-thirds of a bottle of claret while the servants were bringing in the coffee.

“Rather a more favourable account of your expected guest, Isabella, than might have been supposed,” said Mrs. Clifford, as soon as Sir John Slingsby was gone. “A young man who did not drink or play in your father’s regiment, must have been a rare exception; for I am sorry to say that it had a bad name in those respects long before he got it, and I believe that it did him a great deal of harm.”

“Papa is so good-humoured,” replied Miss Slingsby, “that he lets people do just what they like with him. I am sure he wishes to do all that is right.”

Mrs. Clifford was silent for a moment or two, and then turned the conversation; but in

the house of her brother she was rather like a traveller, who, riding through a country, finds himself suddenly and unexpectedly in the midst of what they call in Scotland a shaking moss; whichever path she took, the ground seemed to be giving way under her. She spoke of the old park and the fine trees, and to her dismay, she heard that Sir John had ordered three hundred magnificent oaks to be cut down and sold. She spoke of a sort of model farm which had been her father's pride, and after a moment or two of silence, Isabella thought it better to prevent her coming upon the same subject with her father, by telling her that Sir John, not being fond of farming, had disposed of it some three months before to Mr. Wharton, the solicitor.

"He could not find a tenant easily for it," she continued, "and it annoyed him to have it unoccupied, so he was persuaded to sell it, intending to invest the money in land adjoining the rest of the property."

"I hope Mr. Wharton gave him a fair price for it?" said Mrs. Clifford.

"I really don't know," answered her niece;
"I dislike that man very much."

"And so do I," said Mary Clifford.

"And so do I," added her mother, thoughtfully.

Mr. Wharton had evidently not established himself in the favour of the ladies, and as ladies are always right, he must have been a very bad man indeed.

To vary the pleasures of such a conversation, Miss Slingsby soon after ordered tea, trusting that her father would return before it was over. Sir John Slingsby's half hour, however, extended itself to an hour and a half; but then an immense deal of loud laughing and talking, moving of feet, seeking for hats and coats, and ultimately rolling of wheels, and trotting of horses, was heard in the drawing-room, and the baronet himself again appeared, as full of fun and good-humour as ever. He tried, indeed, somewhat to lower the tone of his gaiety, to suit his sister's more rigid notions; but although he was not in the least tipsy—and, indeed, it was a question which might have

puzzled Babbage's calculating machine to resolve what quantity of any given kind of wine would have affected his brain to the point of inebriety—yet the potations in which he had indulged had certainly spread a genial warmth through his bosom, which kept his spirits at a pitch considerably higher than harmonized very well with Mrs. Clifford's feelings.

At the end of about half an hour's conversation, then, complaining of fatigue, she retired to bed, and was followed by her niece and her daughter, after the former, at her father's desire, had sung him a song to make him sleep comfortably. Sir John then stretched his legs upon a chair to meditate for a minute or two over the unexpected event of his sister's arrival. But the process of meditation was not one that he was at all accustomed to, and consequently he did not perform it with great ease and dexterity. After he had tried it for about thirty seconds, his head nodded, and then looking up, he said, "Ah!" and then attempted it again. Fifteen seconds were enough this time; but his head, finding that it had dis-

turbed itself by its rapid declension on the former occasion, now sank gradually on his shoulder, and thence found its way slowly round to his breast. Deep breathing succeeded for about a quarter of an hour, and then an awful snore, loud enough to rouse the worthy baronet by his own trumpet. Up he started, and getting unsteadily upon his legs, rubbed his eyes, and muttered to himself, "Time to go to bed." Such was the conclusion of his meditation, and the logical result of the process in which he had been engaged.

The next morning, however, at the hour of half-past nine, found Sir John in the breakfast room, as fresh, as rosy, and as gay as ever. If wine had no effect upon his intellect at night, it had none upon his health and comfort in the morning; the blushing banner which he bore in his countenance was the only indication of the deeds that he achieved; and kissing the ladies all round, he sat down to the breakfast table, and spent an hour with them in very agreeable chat. He was by no means ill-informed, not without natural taste, a very

fair theoretical judgment, which was lamentably seldom brought into practice, and he could discourse of many things, when he liked it, in as gentlemanlike and reasonable a manner as any man living ; while his cheerful good-humour shed a sunshine around that, in its sparkling warmth, made men forget his faults and over-estimate his good qualities. He had a particular tact, too, of palliating errors which he had committed, sometimes by acknowledging them frankly, and lamenting the infatuation that produced them, sometimes by finding out excellent good reasons for doing things which had a great deal better been left undone. Mary and Isabella had been walking in the park before breakfast, talking of all those things which young ladies find to converse about when they have not met for some time ; and Sir John, at once aware that his niece's eye must have marked the destruction going on amongst the old trees, asked her in the most deliberate tone in the world, if she had seen the improvements he was making.

Mary Clifford replied "No," and looked at

her cousin as if for explanation, and then Sir John exclaimed—

“Bless my soul, did you not see the alley I am cutting? It will make the most beautiful vista in the world. First you will go round from the house by the back of the wood, slowly mounting the hill, by what we call the Broad Walk, and then when you have reached the top, you will have a clear view down through a sort of glade, with the old trees on your right and left hand, over the clumps of young firs in the bottom, catching the stream here and there, and having the park-wall quite concealed, till the eye, passing over the meadows, just rests upon Tarningham church, and then running on, gets a view of your own place, Hinton, looking like a white speck on the side of the hill, and the prospect is closed by the high grounds beyond. My dear Mary, it is the greatest improvement that ever was made—we will go and see it.”

Now the real truth was, that Sir John Slingsby, some four or five months before, had very much wanted three thousand pounds, and

he had determined to convert a certain number of his trees into bank-notes ; but being a man of very good taste, as I have said, he had arranged the cutting so as to damage his park scenery as little as possible. Nevertheless, in all he said to Mary Clifford, strange as the assertion may seem, he was perfectly sincere ; for he was one of those men who always begin by deceiving themselves, and having done that, can hardly be said to deceive others. It is a sort of infectious disease they have, that is all, and they communicate it, after having got it themselves. Before he had cut a single tree, he had perfectly persuaded himself that to do so would effect the greatest improvement in the world ; and he was quite proud of having beautified his park, and at the same time obtained three thousand pounds of ready money.

Doubtless, had the conversation turned that way, he would have found as good an excuse as valid a reason, as legitimate a motive, for selling the model farm ; but that not being the case, they went on talking of different subjects, till suddenly the door opened, the butler, who

was nearly as fat as his master, advanced three steps in a solemn manner, and announced, "Captain Hayward."

Sir John instantly started up, and the three ladies raised their eyes simultaneously, partly with that peculiar sort of curiosity which people feel when they look into the den of some rare wild beast, and partly with that degree of interest which we all take in the outward form and configuration of one of our own species, upon whom depends a certain portion of the pleasure or pain, amusement or dulness, of even a few hours. The next moment our friend Ned Hayward was in the room. He was well-dressed and well-looking, as I have already described him in his riding costume. Gentleman was in every line and every movement, and his frank, pleasant smile, his clear, open countenance were very engaging even at the first sight. Sir John shook him warmly by the hand, and although the baronet's countenance had so burgeoned and blossomed since he last saw him, that the young gentleman had some difficulty in recognising his former

colonel, yet Ned Hayward returned his grasp with equal cordiality, and then looked round, as his host led him up towards Miss Slingsby, and re-introduced them to each other. Great was the surprise of both the baronet and his daughter, to see Mrs. Clifford rise, and with a warm smile extend her hand to their new guest, and even Mary Clifford follow her mother's example, and welcome, as if he were an old friend, the very person with whose name they had seemed unacquainted the night before.

"Ah, ha, Ned!" cried Sir John; "how is this, boy? Have you been poaching upon my preserves without my knowing it? 'Pon my life, Harriet, you have kept your acquaintance with my little ensign quite snug and secret."

"It is an acquaintance of a very short date, John," replied Mrs. Clifford; "but one which has been of inestimable service to me already."

And she proceeded in a very few words to explain to her brother the debt of gratitude she owed to Captain Hayward for his interference the night before, and for the courtesy

he had shown in escorting and protecting her to the doors of that very house.

Sir John immediately seized his guest by the lappels of the coat, exclaiming—

“And why the devil didn’t you come in, you dog? What, Ned Hayward at my gates, an expected guest, and not come in! I can tell you, we should have given you a warm reception; fined you a couple of bottles for being late at dinner, and sent you to bed roaring drunk.”

Ned Hayward gave a gay glance round at the ladies, as if inquiring whether they thought these were great inducements; he answered, however—

“Strange to say, I did not know it was your house, Sir John.”

And now, having placed our friend Ned Hayward comfortably between two excessively pretty girls of very different styles of beauty, and very different kinds of mind, I shall leave Fate to settle his destiny, and turn to another scene which had preceded his arrival at Tarningham House.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAN never sees above half of anything, never knows above half of anything, never understands above half of anything; and upon this half sight, half knowledge, and half understanding, he acts, supplying the deficiency of his information by a guess at the rest, in which there is more than an equal chance that he is wrong instead of right. That is the moral of this chapter.

After Ned Hayward's interview with Stephen Gimlet, *alias* Wolf, our friend turned his steps back towards Tarningham, and arrived at the White Hart by eight o'clock. About three quarters of an hour had shaved him, dressed him, and

brushed his hair, and down he went to the little parlour in which he had passed the preceding evening, just in time to find Mr. Beauchamp beginning his breakfast. Although the latter gentleman shook his companion cordially by the hand, and seemed to look upon his presence in the parlour as a matter of course, Ned Hayward thought fit to apologize for his intrusion, adding, "I shall not maroon myself upon you very long, for soon after breakfast I shall decamp to Sir John Slingsby's."

"I am sorry, I assure you, to lose the pleasure of your society so soon," replied Beauchamp, and then added, addressing the maid, who had just brought in some broiled ham, "you had better bring some more cups and saucers, my good girl."

"And some more ham, and also a cold fowl." added Ned Hayward. "I have the appetite of an ogre, and if you do not make haste, I must have a bit out of your rosy cheek, my dear, just to stay my stomach."

"La, sir!" cried the maid, with a coquettish little titter; but she ran away to get what was

wanted, as if she were really afraid of the consequences of Ned Hayward's appetite; and as soon as she was gone, he said—

“I have got news for you, Beauchamp; but I will wait till the room is clear before I give it. I have been up and out, over the hills and far away, this morning; so I have well earned my breakfast.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed his companion, with a look of surprise; “really you are an active general; but you should have given your fellow-soldiers information of your movements, and we might have combined operations.”

“There was no time to be lost,” answered Hayward.

But at that moment the maid returned with the cold fowl; the ham was still in the rear, and it was not till breakfast was half over that the young officer could tell his tale. When he had got as far with it as the first explanations of Mr. Gimlet, Beauchamp exclaimed eagerly, “And what did it turn out to be?”

“Nothing, after all, but a love affair,” answered Ned. “Now, my dear Beauchamp,

I have as much compassion for all lovers as an old match-making dowager; and therefore I think it will be better to let this matter drop quietly."

"Oh, certainly," answered his new friend, "I am quite as tender-hearted in such matters as yourself; but are you quite sure of the fact? for this seems to me to have been a very odd way of making love."

"It was so, assuredly," replied Hayward, "but, nevertheless, the tale is true. The fact is, the young lady is an heiress, the mother strict—most likely the latter looks for some high match for her daughter, and will not hear of the youth's addresses. He falls into despair, and, with a Roman courage, resolves to carry off a bride. Unfortunately for his purpose, we come up, and the rape of the Sabines is prevented; but, 'pon my honour, I admire the fellow for his spirit. There is something chivalrous—nay, more—feudal about it. He must fancy himself some old baron who had a right prescriptive to run away with every man's daughter that suited him; and, on my life, my

dear Beauchamp, I can go on no further in attempting to punish him for a deed whose hot and proof spirit shames this milk-and-water age. Oh, the times of carrying off heiresses, of robbing in cocked hats and full-bottomed wigs, of pinking one's adversary under the fifth rib in Leicester Fields, with gentlemen in high shoes and gold lace for seconds, and chairmen for spectators, when will they come again? Gone, gone for ever, my dear Beauchamp, into the same box as our grandmother's brocade-gown, and with them the last spark of the spirit of chivalry has expired."

"Very true," answered Beauchamp, smiling at his companion's tirade, "there was certainly an adventurous turn about those days which saved them from dulness; but yet there was a primness about them which was curious, a formality mingling with their wildest excesses, a prudery with their licentiousness, which can only be attributed to the cut of their clothes. There is some mysterious link between them, depend upon it, Hayward; and whether it be that the clothes affect the man, or the man the

clothes, it is not for me to say; but the grand internal harmony of nature will not be violated, and the spirit of the age is represented in the coats, waistcoats, and breeches of the people of the period much better than in all the stupid books written from time to time to display it."

This was the first sentence that Ned Hayward had ever heard his companion speak in a jocular tone, but Beauchamp immediately went on, in a graver manner, to say, "Yet, after all, I do not see how we can drop this matter entirely. Far be it from me, of all men on earth, to persecute another; but yet, having already given information of this attempt at robbery, as it seemed to us, and tendered our evidence on oath, we cannot well draw back. A gross offence has indubitably been committed, not only in the attack upon these two ladies, but also in the very violent and murderous resistance which was made when we arrived to their rescue; and this young gentleman should have a warning, at least."

"To be sure—to be sure," answered Ned Hayward; "I have got the pistol ball singing

in my ear now, and I am quite willing to give him a fright, and old Wittingham too. The latter I will, please Heaven, torment out of the remnant of seven senses that he has left: for a more pompous, vulgar old blockhead I never saw; and therefore I should propose at once—that is to say, as soon as I have done this cup of coffee—you have finished, I see—to go to good Mr. Wittingham's, and belabour him with our small wits, till he is nearly like the man who was scourged to death with rushes."

"Nay, nothing quite so sanguinary as that, I trust," said Beauchamp; "but I will accompany you willingly, and see fair play between you and the magistrate."

According to this arrangement, as soon as breakfast was over, and Ned Hayward had given some directions with regard to preparing his horse, his baggage, and a conveyance for the latter, the two gentlemen sallied forth to the magistrate's room in the town, where they found Mr. Wittingham seated with a clerk, the inferior attorney of the place. The latter was a man well fitted to prompt an ignorant

and self-conceited magistrate in a matter of difficulty, if its importance were not very great, and he knew all the particulars. He was a little, fat, compact man—in form, feature, and expression very like a Chinese pig. His nose had the peculiar turn-up of the snout of that animal, his small eyes the same sagacious twinkle, his retreating under-jaw the same voracious and ever-ready look, and when at all puzzled, he would lift his head and give a peculiar snort, so exceedingly porcine in its tone, that one could scarcely divest oneself of the idea that he was one of the mud-loving herd. Nevertheless, he was a very good sort of little man.

On the present occasion, indeed he was ignorant of the facts of the case about to be brought before Mr. Wittingham—the latter gentleman having considered with great solicitude whether he should make him acquainted with all that had occurred, and seek his advice and co-operation. But Mr. Wittingham was cautious, exceedingly cautious, as I have already shown, when no strong passion caused

him to act in a decided manner upon the spur of the moment. His natural impulse might indeed be vehement, and he frequently had to repeat to himself that sage adage, "The least said is soonest mended," before he could get himself to refrain from saying a word to the clerk, Mr. Bacon, except that two men had come to him the night before, with a cock-and-a-bull story about a highway robbery, of which he did not believe a word, and they were to come again that morning, when he should sift it thoroughly.

Now it is wonderful how the very least bits of art will frequently betray the artist. Mr. Wittingham merely said, "Two men," which led his clerk, Mr. Bacon, to suppose that he had never seen either of the two men before; but when Mr. Beauchamp appeared, in company with Ned Hayward, and the clerk recollected that the magistrate had very frequently wondered, in his presence, who Mr. Beauchamp could be, and had directed him to make every sort of inquiry, he naturally said to himself, "Ha, ha, Wittingham has got something that

he wishes to conceal ; if not, why didn't he say at once that Mr. Beauchamp was one of the two ? There's a screw loose somewhere—that's clear."

On Ned Hayward, the clerk's small eyes fixed with a keen, inquisitive, and marvelling glance, as, with his gay dashing air, half military, half sporting, firm and yet light, measured and yet easy, he advanced into the room and approached the table. It was a sort of animal that Mr. Bacon had never beheld in his life before ; and he looked just like a young pig when it sees a stage-coach dash by, standing firm for a minute, but ready in an instant to toss up its snout, curl up its tail, and caper off with a squeak as fast as it can go.

" Well, Mr. Witherington," said Ned Hayward, perfectly aware that nothing so much provokes a pompous man as mistaking his name, " here we are according to appointment ; and doubtless you are ready to take our depositions, Mr. Witherington."

" Wittingham, sir," said the magistrate, impressively, laying a strong emphasis on each

syllable, "I beg you'll give me my own name, and nobody else's."

"Ay, ay; Wittington," said Ned Hayward, with the utmost composure, "I forgot; I knew it was some absurd name in an old ballad or story, and confounded you, somehow or other, with the man in 'Chevy Chase,' who

' When his legs were smitten off,
He fought upon his stumps.'

But I remember now, you're the son of the Lord-Mayor of London, the cat-man."

"No, sir—no," exclaimed Mr. Wittingham, whose face had turned purple with rage; "I am not his son, and you must be a fool to think so, for he died two hundred years ago."

"Oh, I know nothing of history," said Ned Hayward, laughing; "and besides, I dare say it's all a fable."

"This gentleman's name is Wittingham, sir," said the clerk, "W-I-T wit, T-I-N-G ting, H-A-M ham, Wittingham."

"Oh, thank you—thank you, sir," said the young gentleman, "I shan't forget it now. '*Littera scripta manet*,' Mr. What's-your-name."

"My name is Bacon, sir," said the clerk, with a grunt.

"Ah, very well—very well," replied Ned Hayward, "now to business. Wittingham, Bacon, and Co.; I shan't forget that; an excellent good firm, especially when the junior partner is cut into rashers and well roasted. We are here, sir, to tender information upon oath, when it can no longer be of any avail, which we tendered last night, when it might have been of avail, in regard to an attempt at highway robbery, committed yesterday evening upon the persons of two ladies in this neighbourhood—namely, Mrs. Clifford and her daughter."

"Tendered last night, sir!" exclaimed the clerk, in spite of a tremendous nudge from Mr. Wittingham—"pray whom did you tender it to?"

"To the right reverend gentleman on the bench," said Ned Hayward, with a profound bow to the worthy magistrate; and, then looking at him full in the face with a significant smile, the young gentleman added, "he re-

fused to take our depositions on secret motives, or information of his own, which, as it was kept in the profound depth of his mind, I will not attempt to penetrate."

Mr. Wittingham was in a state of most distressing perplexity. His fears were a powder magazine, Ned Hayward's smile was a spark, and there was a terrible explosion in his chest, which had nearly blown the window out.

"I—I—you see, Bacon," he whispered to the clerk, "I thought it was all nonsense, I was sure it was all nonsense—you may see by the fellow's manner that it is so. Who'd attend to such stuff?"

"I don't know, sir," said the clerk; "magistrates are bound to take informations of felonies tendered on oath; but we shall soon see who he is; we'll swear him," and, taking up a paper from the table, he began to write, lifting up his head, after a moment, and inquiring, "What is your name and profession?"

"My name is Edward Hayward," answered our friend, "late captain in His Majesty's 40th regiment, now unattached."

Mr. Wittingham's face grew blanker and blanker. Yamen's own could not have looked a more russety brown. He did not know how to interfere with the clerk, or how to proceed himself; but at length, after sundry hums and haws, he said, "I think we had better hear the whole story first, and then take down the deposition, if we should find it necessary. If Mrs. Clifford was robbed, or attempted to be robbed, why doesn't Mrs. Clifford come to give information herself? I see no reason why we should suffer such accounts to be gone into by deputy. The offence was against Mrs. Clifford, and we shall always be ready to balance."

"The offence was against the law of the land, sir," said Mr. Beauchamp, stepping forward, "and we who witnessed the offence, and prevented it from being carried further, now come forward to demand that interference of justice which cannot be refused, without great danger to those who deny it."

"Well, well," said Mr. Wittingham, "I am not going to deny it. Let us hear your story, and as you are one of the informers, be so

good as to favour us with your name, profession, etc."

"My name, sir, is Beauchamp," replied the gentleman he addressed, "profession, I am sorry to say, I have none."

"Ah," said the magistrate, drily; but the clerk whispered sharply in his ear: "He has two thousand pounds in the bank, paid in the day before yesterday. Jenkins told me last night at the Free and Easy, so it's all a mistake about his being—you know what."

The clerk had a reverence for gentlemen who had two thousand pounds at one time in a country bank—much greater reverence than for captains of infantry unattached; and consequently he proceeded to take Mr. Beauchamp's deposition first, with all due respect, notwithstanding every thing Mr. Wittingham could do to embarrass his course of operations. Then came Ned Hayward's turn, but our good friend thought fit to be more serious when an oath had been administered, and delivered his evidence with gravity and propriety. As soon, however, as Mr. Wittingham began to meddle with the matter again, and to treat the affair as

one of little consequence, and not deserving much consideration, the spirit of malicious fun seized upon Ned once more, and he said with a mysterious air, "Sir, I beg you will give this your most serious attention, for you cannot yet tell what parties may be implicated. In giving our testimony, of course we speak to facts alone. I have strictly confined myself to what I saw, and have not even mentioned one circumstance of which I have even a shade of doubt; but without interfering with your business, Mr. Skittington—for I never take another man's trade upon me—yet I shall certainly feel myself called upon to investigate quietly, and by all lawful means, the whole particulars of this business. That a felony has been committed there can be no doubt; two pistols were fired at me with intent to take my life, or do me some grievous bodily harm; one ball went through my hair, and the matter is a very grave one, which may probably bring some respectable persons into a noose under a gallows. Look to it, look to it, Mr. Whittington! for I shall certainly look to it myself."

"Well, sir, well—do anything you please,"

said the magistrate, "I will do my duty without being tutored by you. I consider your conduct very disrespectful and——"

But ere he could finish the sentence the door of the justice-room opened, and a young man entered, dressed in the garb of a gentleman. Mr. Wittingham's face turned as pale as death; and Ned Hayward fixed his eyes for an instant—a single instant—upon the countenance of the new-comer. It was by no means a prepossessing one, and the expression was not improved by a black handkerchief being tied over one eye, and hiding part of the nose and cheek. The young officer instantly withdrew his eyes, and fixed them sternly on the ground. "This is too impudent," he thought; and there was a momentary hesitation in his mind as to whether he should not at once point out the intruder as the chief offender in the acts lately under discussion. Good-nature, however, prevailed, and while Henry Wittingham advanced straight to his father's side, and with a look of bold fierceness whispered a word in his ear, Ned Hayward

turned to the door, saying, "Come, Beauchamp, our business here is over, and I must go up to Sir John Slingsby's."

Beauchamp followed him, after giving a sharp glance at Henry Wittingham, and at the door of the house they saw a horse standing which seemed to have been ridden hard.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. BEAUCHAMP was sitting alone in the little room of the inn about four hours after Ned Hayward had left him. The day had been very warm for the season of the year, and though he had taken his walk as usual in the most shady and pensive places he could discover, he had found it oppressive, and had returned sooner than he ordinarily did. Mr. Groomber, worthy Mr. Groomber, the landlord of the White Hart, had perceived his return through the glass-doors of the bar, and had rolled in to tell him, as a piece of news, that the post-boy who had driven Mrs. and Miss Clifford had been, as he termed it, "had up,"

before Mr. Wittingham and examined, but had been speedily dismissed, he having sworn most valorously that he could not identify any of the persons concerned in stopping the chaise on the preceding night.

Mr. Beauchamp merely replied, "I thought so," and taking up a book, gave quiet intimation that he wished to be alone. As soon as the host had retired, however, he suffered the open volume to drop upon his knee, and gave himself up to thought, apparently of not the most cheerful kind, for the broad open brow became somewhat contracted, the fine dark eyes fixed upon one particular spot on the floor, the lip assumed a melancholy, even a cynical expression, and without moving limb or feature, he remained for at least a quarter of an hour in meditation most profound.

For my own part, I do not see what business men have to think at all. If it be of the past, can they recall it? If it be of the future, can they govern it? No, no; and the present is for action, not for meditation. It was very

foolish of Mr. Beauchamp to think, but yet he did so, and profoundly. But of what were his thoughts? I cannot tell. Some I know, some I do not know; or rather, like an intercepted letter, the actual course of his meditation was plain enough, written in clear and forcible lines, but the wide world of circumstances to which it referred, its relations with his fate, with his past history, with his present condition, with his future prospects, were all in darkness.

"It is in vain," he said to himself, "all in vain! Peace, happiness, tranquillity—where do they dwell? Are they the mere phantasms of man's ever-building imaginations? creations of fancy, to satisfy the craving need of the soul? And yet some men can obtain them. This very Captain Hayward, he seems at least as well contented, as well satisfied with himself, the world, and all the world gives, as it is possible to conceive. But it is not so—it cannot be so. There is a black spot somewhere, I am sure,—some bitter memory, some disappointed hope, some aspiration for the some-

thing ever desired. He owned he dared not venture to love—is not that to be in a continued chain, to bear a fetter about one? and yet he seemed contented with such a fate. It is the regulation of our desires that makes us happy, the bounding them to our means—ay, with those who have no already existing cause for sorrow, the cup of our fate is ever open for each passing hand to drop a poison into it, and once there, it pervades the whole—the whole? by every drop down to the very dregs, turning the sweetness and the spirit of the wine of life to bitterness and death. What is it that I want that can make existence pleasant? Wealth, health, a mind carefully trained and furnished with the keys to every door of mental enjoyment—with love for my fellow-creatures, goodwill to all men, I have all—surely all; but, alas! I have memory, too, and like the pillar of the cloud, it sometimes follows me, darkening the past, sometimes goes before me, obscuring the future. Yet this is very weak. An effort of the mind—the mind I have vainly thought so strong—should surely suffice to cast off the

load. I have tried occupation, calm enjoyments, fair scenes, tranquil pleasures, peaceful amusements. Perhaps in a more fiery and eager course, in active, energetic pursuits, in passions that absorb all the feelings, and wrap the soul in their own mantle, I may find forgetfulness. In all that I have hitherto done, there have been long intervals, open gates for bitter memory to enter, and the very nature of my chosen objects has invited her. Oh, yes, there must be such a thing as happiness! that girl's fair, joyous face, her smile teeming with radiance, told me so. But I will not think of her. She is too bright, and fair, and happy, to risk her peace on so hazardous a speculation as mine. I will go away from this place: it has given my mind some little repose, and I could have made a friend of that light, good-humoured Hayward, if he would have let me—but he has left me, too—all things leave me, I think. Well, he is gone, and I will go, too—'tis not worth while lingering longer."

At this point of his meditations, some horses passed the window, and shadows darkened the

room; but Beauchamp took no notice, till he heard a voice which had become somewhat familiar to him during the last eighteen hours, exclaiming, "Ostler, ostler!" and in a moment after, Ned Hayward was in the room again, but not alone. He was followed by the portly figure of Sir John Slingsby, dressed in riding costume, and though somewhat dusty, and certainly very round and heavy, yet bearing that undefinable and almost ineffaceable look of a gentleman which not even oddities and excesses had been able to wipe out.

Ned Hayward's words were few and soon spoken: "Mr. Beauchamp, Sir John Slingsby; Sir John, Mr. Beauchamp," were all he said, but the old baronet soon took up the conversation, shaking his new acquaintance warmly by the hand.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Beauchamp — very glad to see you. I find my family are under a great obligation to you—that is to say, my sister Harriet, Mrs. Clifford. Devilish impudent thing, by Jove, for those fellows to attack a carriage at that time of the evening; and very

lucky you happened to be there, for my friend Ned Hayward here, though he has a notion of tactics—haven't you, Ned?—and is a stout fellow, could hardly have managed three of them."

"I look upon myself as very fortunate, Sir John," replied Mr. Beauchamp, "in having taken my evening walk in that direction; but at the same time, it is but fair to acknowledge that my share in the rescue of your sister and her daughter was but small. I only kept one man in play, while Captain Hayward had to contend with two."

"All the same—all the same, my dear sir," said the baronet; "the reserve shares all the glory of a battle, even if it does not pull a trigger. The ladies, however, are exceedingly obliged to you—very good girls, both of them—not that they have commissioned me to express their thanks, far from it, for they are particularly anxious to do so themselves, if you will give them the opportunity; and therefore they have begged me to ask if you would favour us by your company at dinner to-day,

and to say that they will be devilish sorry if any previous engagement should prevent you, though they calculate upon to-morrow, if not to-day."

"I am quite an anchorite here, Sir John," answered Mr. Beauchamp, with a grave smile; but before he could finish his sentence, the old baronet, thinking it was the commencement of an excuse, hastened to stop it, saying—

"Quite a quiet dinner, I assure you—all as grave and proper as possible; no drinking, no laughing, no fun—all upon our good behaviour. There will be nobody but you, Ned Hayward, I, and the doctor there; Harriet, Mary, and my girl—who, by the way, says she knows you—has seen you more than once at the good doctor's—Doctor Miles's."

"I have had the pleasure of meeting Miss Slingsby," said Beauchamp. "I was only about to answer you just now, Sir John, that I am quite an anchorite here, and therefore not likely to have many invitations to dinner. As I have not much cultivated the people of the place, they have not much cultivated me; and

I believe they look upon me as a somewhat suspicious character, especially our friend Mr. Wittingham, who, I find, has been very curious in his inquiries as to whether I pay my bills, and where I go to when I walk out."

"Wittingham's an old fool!" exclaimed Sir John Slingsby; "and, like all other old fools, he thinks himself the wisest man in the world. I wonder what the lord-lieutenant could be dreaming of when he put him in the commission of the peace—a man no more fit for it than my horsewhip. I'll pay him for it all—I'll pay him—ask him to dinner—make him beastly drunk, and lodge him for the night in a horse-trough."

"I hope not this evening, Sir John," said Beauchamp, with a smile.

"Oh, dear, no," replied the baronet, with a look of rueful fear; "all very prim to-night—all as grave as judges—quite proper and discreet while my sister Harriet is with us—an archdeacon's widow, you know—a dean's, after all—though he was only dean for a couple of months—a very good man, indeed, but exceed-

ingly proper—terribly proper: the very sound of a cork frightened him out of his wits. I do believe he fancied that Port and Madeira are sent over in decanters, and claret in jugs with handles. However, you'll come, that's settled: half-past five, old-fashioned hours, gives plenty of time after dinner. But now that's no use," added the baronet, with a sigh; "we might as well dine at seven now—no use of a long evening. However, the girls will give us a song, or music of some kind, and perhaps we can make up a rubber at long whist, which will make us sleep as sound as dormice. No sin in that—no, Ned?"

"None in the world, Sir John," answered Ned Hayward, "but a great deal of dulness. I never could make out in my life how men, with their wits about them, could spend hours throwing bits of painted pasteboard in a particular order for shillings and sixpences."

"Just as reasonable as standing up for hours to be shot at for shillings and sixpences," answered Sir John Slingsby; "and both you and I have played at that, you dog. Every-

thing is folly if you take it in the abstract—love, war, wine, ambition; and depend upon it, Ned, the lightest follies are the best—isn't it so, Mr. Beauchamp?"

"There is indeed some truth in what you say, Sir John," replied Beauchamp, with a thoughtful smile; "and I believe amusing follies are better than serious ones—at least, I begin to think so now."

"To be sure—to be sure," answered Sir John Slingsby; "man was made for fun and not for sadness. It's a very nice world if people would let it be so. Oh, we'll show you some sport, Mr. Beauchamp, before we have done with you; but to-day, you know, we'll all be very proper—very good boys indeed—and then when the cat's away the mice will play. Ha! ha! ha! At half-past five, you know, and in the meantime, Ned and I will ride off and abuse old Wittingham. I'll give him a pretty lecture."

Good Sir John was disappointed, however; his horses, his groom, and his bulky person, had all been seen from the windows of Mr. Wittingham's house as he rode into the town

with Ned Hayward, and as a matter of course, Mr. Wittingham was over the hills and far away before the visit of Mr. Beauchamp was concluded.

When Sir John and Ned Hayward left him, Beauchamp remained for some minutes with a smile upon his countenance—a meditative—nay, a melancholy smile.

“So fleet our resolutions!” he said to himself, “so fade away our schemes and purposes! Who can say in this life what he will do and what he will not do the next day—nay, the next minute? Which is the happiest, after all, the man who struggles with fate and circumstance, and strives to perform the impracticable task of ruling them, or he who, like a light thing upon the waters, suffers himself to be carried easily down the current, whirling round with every eddy, resting quietly in the still pool, or dashing gaily down the rapids? Heaven knows, but at all events, fate has shown herself so resolute to take my affairs into her own hands, that I will not try to resist her. I will indulge every whim, and leave fortune to settle

the result. I may as well purchase that property: it is as good an investment as any other. I dare say, and if not, it does not much signify, I will write to my agent to transmit the money to-day."

With this resolution he sat down, and had soon despatched a few lines, which he carried to the post himself: then strolled out of the town for an hour, and then returned to dress, ordering a post-chaise for Tarningham Park.

How different are the sensations with which one goes out to dinner at different times—ay, even when it is to the house of a new acquaintance, where we have little means of judging previously whether our day will be pleasant or unpleasant, joyous or sad! As there must be more than one party to each compact, and as the agent and its object act and react upon each other, so the qualities of each have their share in the effect upon either, and the mood of the visitor has at least as much to do with the impression that he receives as the mood of the host. Wonderfully trite!—is it not, reader? It has been said a thousand times before, but it

will not do you the least harm to have it repeated, especially as I wish you clearly to understand the mood in which Mr. Beauchamp went, for the first time, to the house of Sir John Slingsby. It was, then, in that kind of indifferent mood of which I have shown some indications, by describing what was passing in his mind after the baronet and Ned Hayward left him. There are, however, various sorts of indifferent moods: there is the gay indifference, which is very commonly called devil-me-carishness; then there is the impertinent indifference, with a dash of persiflage in it, just to take off the chill—as men put brandy into soda-water—which very empty and conceited men assume to give them an air of that superiority to which they are entitled by no mental quality. Then there is the indifference of despair, and the indifference of satiety. But none of these was the exact sort of indifference which Mr. Beauchamp felt, or thought he felt. It was a grave indifference, springing from a sort of morbid conviction that the happiness or unhappiness of man is not at all in his own hands, or that

if it be at all so, it is only at his outset in life, and that the very first step so affects the whole course of after events, as to place the control over them totally beyond his own power. It is a bad philosophy—a very unsafe, untrue, unwise philosophy; and a great author has made it the philosophy of the devil :

Thus we

In our first choice are ever free ;
Choose, and the right choice is o'er ;
We who were free, are free no more.

So says Göthe, according to Anster's beautiful translation; and I think it much better to give that translation which every body can understand, than the original which one half of my readers cannot, and which would not be a bit better if they could.

Now Mr. Beauchamp was not the devil, nor anything the least like it; but yet this philosophy had been driven into him by his own previous history, and though he often resisted its influence, and strove to struggle with it, to cast off the chain that bound him, and by new acts to shape a new fate, yet he had been so

often disappointed in the attempt, he had found every course, indeed, so constantly lead to the same result, that the philosophy returned as soon as the effort was over, and he looked upon almost every event with indifference, as destined to end in one manner, and that not a pleasant one.

Nevertheless, he could enjoy for the time: there was no man by nature better fitted for enjoyment. He had a fondness for every thing that was great and beautiful; for every thing that was good and noble: he loved flowers, and birds, and music, and the fair face of nature. His breast was full of harmonies, but unfortunately the tones were never prolonged; to borrow a simile from the musical instrument, there was a damper that fell almost as soon as the chord was struck, and the sound, sweet as it might be, ceased before the music was complete.

In driving along,—although the post-boy went somewhat slowly, and with a peculiarly irritating jog in the saddle, which would have sadly disturbed a person of a less indifferent

mind—there was plenty of room for pleasant observation, if not reflection. The road ran through wooded groves, and often turned along the bank of the stream. At times it mounted over a hill-side, and showed, beyond a rich and leafy foreground, the wide extended landscape, undulating away towards the horizon, with the lines of wood and slope beautifully marked in the aerial perspective, and filling the mind with vague imaginations of things that the eye could not define. It dipped down into a valley, too, and passed through a quiet, peaceful little village, with a group of tall silver poplars before the church, and a congregation of fine old beech trees around the rectory. The whole aspect of the place was home tranquillity; that of a purely English village under the most favourable circumstances. Cleanliness, neatness, rustic ornament, an air of comfort, a cheerful openness, a look of healthfulness. How different from the villages one sometimes sees, alas! in every country, but less in England than anywhere else in the wide world: the abodes of fever, dirt, penury, wretchedness.

As he passed the rectory, with its smooth, well-mown lawn, and green gates, Beauchamp put his head to the carriage-window and looked out. He expected to see, perhaps, a neat one-horse chaise, and a sleek, well-fed beast to draw it; but there was nothing of the kind there, and he remarked the traces of a pair of wheels from the door on the road before him. Half a mile further were the gates of Sir John Slingsby's park. It cannot be said that they were in very good order, the iron-work wanted painting sadly, one or two of the bars had got a sad twist, the columns of stone-work to which they were fixed needed pointing, if not more solid repairs. The lodge had all the shutters up, and the post-boy had to get down and open the gates.

Beauchamp sighed, not because he took any great interest in the place or the people it contained, but because the aspect of desolation—of the decay of man's works—especially from neglect, is well worth a sigh. The drive through the park, however, was delightful. Old trees were all around, glorious old trees, those

ever-growing monuments of the past, those silent leafy chroniclers of ages gone. Who planted them, who nourished, who protected them? what times have they seen, what deeds have they witnessed, what storms have passed over them, what sunshine have they drunk, what sorrows, and what joys have visited the generations of man, since first they sprang up from the small seed till now, when they stretch out their giant arms to shelter the remote posterity of those whom they have seen flourish and pass away? Who can wander among old trees, and not ask such questions—ay, and a thousand more.

The sight was pleasant to Mr. Beauchamp, it had a serious yet pleasing effect upon his mind, and when the chaise drew up at the door of Tarningham House, he felt more disposed than before to enjoy the society within, whatever it might be.

The outer door was open, the fat butler threw back pompously the two glass doors within, a couple of round footmen, whose lineaments were full of ale, flanked the hall on

either side, and thus Mr. Beauchamp was marshalled to the drawing-room, which he entered with his calm and dignified air, not in the slightest degree agitated, although he was well aware that two very pretty faces were most likely looking for his arrival.

Sir John Slingsby, in the blue coat, the white waistcoat, the black breeches and stockings, with the rubicund countenance and white hair, advanced at once to receive him, and presented him to Mrs. Clifford and her daughter.

"This young lady you already know, Mr. Beauchamp," he said, pointing to his daughter, "so I shan't introduce you here."

But that gentleman shook hands with Miss Slingsby first, proving that their acquaintance, however short, had made some steps towards friendship.

Isabella was a little fluttered in her manner, why, she scarcely knew herself, and the colour grew a little deeper in her cheek, and her smile wavered, as if she would fain have seemed not too well pleased. All this, however, did not at all take from her beauty; for as a fair scene

is never lovelier than when the shadows of drifting clouds are passing over it, so a pretty face is never prettier than under the influence of slight emotions.

Miss Slingsby and Mary Clifford were standing both together, so that Beauchamp had both those sweet faces before him at once. Isabella was as fair as a lily, with eyes of a deep blue, and warm brown hair, neither light nor dark, clustering richly round her brow and cheek in wilful curls that would have their own way. Mary Clifford was darker in complexion, with the hair braided on her brow, there was deep but gentle thought in her dark eyes, and though the short chiselled upper lip could at times bear a joyous smile enough, yet the general expression was grave though not melancholy.

Beauchamp was a serious man, of a calm, quiet temper, somewhat saddened by various events which had befallen him, but which of those two faces, reader, think you he admired the most! The gay one, to be sure, the one the least like himself. So it is wisely ordained by nature, and it is the force of circumstances

alone that ever makes us choose a being similar to ourselves to be our companion through existence. Two tones, exactly the same, even upon different instruments, produce unison not harmony ; and so it is throughout all nature.

After a few words to Isabella, Mr. Beauchamp turned again to Mrs. Clifford, who at once spoke of their adventure of the night before, and thanked him for his kind assistance. Beauchamp said all that courtesy required, and said it gracefully and well. He expressed the pleasure that he felt to see that neither of the ladies had suffered from the fear or agitation they had undergone, and expressed great satisfaction at having been near the spot at the moment the attack was made.

While they were speaking, Sir John Slingsby had twice taken out his watch—it was a large one, hanging by a thick gold chain, and Mr. Beauchamp, thinking that he divined the cause of his disquiet, observed, with a smile—

“Dr. Miles must be here, I think, for, judging by small signs, such as the traces of wheels and an open gate, I imagine that he had left home before I passed.”

“ Oh, yes ; he is here,” answered Sir John Slingsby, “ he has been here ten minutes ; but the old boy, who is as neat in his person as in his ideas, had got a little dust upon his black coat, and is gone to brush it off and wash his hands. That open chaise of his costs him more time in washing and brushing, than writing his sermons ; but I can’t think what has become of that fellow, Ned Hayward. The dog went out two hours ago for a walk through the park up to the moor, and I suppose, ‘ Thoughtless Ned,’ as we used to call him, has forgotten that we dine at half-past five. Well, we won’t wait for him ; as soon as the doctor comes we will order dinner, and fine him a bumper for being late.”

While he was speaking, Dr. Miles, the clergyman of the village through which Beauchamp had passed, entered the room, and shook him warmly by the hand. He was a tall, spare man, with a look of florid health in his countenance, and snow-white hair ; his face was certainly not handsome, and there was a grave and somewhat stern expression in it, but

yet it was pleasing, especially when he smiled, which, to say the truth, was not often. It may seem a contradiction in terms to say that he laughed oftener than he smiled, yet so it was, for his laugh was not always good-humoured, especially in the house of Sir John Slingsby. There was, from time to time, something bitter and cynical in it, and generally found vent when anything was said, the folly of which he thought exceeded the wickedness. He was one of the few men of perfect respectability who was a constant visitor at Tarningham House; but the truth was, that he was the rector of Sir John Slingsby's parish. Now, on consideration of tithes, perquisites, good dinners, comforts, and conveniences, would have induced Dr. Miles to do anything that he thought wrong; but he argued in this manner:—

“Sir John Slingsby is an old fool, and one who is likely to get worse instead of better, if nobody of more rational views, higher feelings, and more reasonable pursuits takes any notice of him. Now I, from my position, am bound

to do the best I can to bring him to a better state of mind. I may effect something in this way, by seeing him frequently. At all events, I can do much to prevent his becoming worse; my presence is some check upon these people; and even if it does little good to the father, there is that sweet, dear, amiable girl, who needs some support and comfort in her unpleasant situation."

Such were some of the considerations upon which Dr. Miles acted. There were many more indeed, but these are enough for my purpose. He shook Beauchamp warmly by the hand, as we have seen, and seemed to be more intimate with him than anybody in the room, taking him aside, and speaking to him for a moment or two in private, while Sir John Slingsby rang the bell, and ordered dinner without waiting for Captain Hayward.

"William Slack, Sir John, has seen him," said the butler, "coming down the long avenue with something in his arms—he thinks it's a fawn."

"Well then, he'll be here soon," said the

master of the mansion ; “ serve dinner, serve dinner ; by Jove, I won’t wait ! Devil take the fellow, the ensign shouldn’t keep his colonel waiting. It’s not respectful. I’ll fine him two bumpers if the soup’s off before he makes his appearance.”

In the meantime, the first words of Dr. Miles to Mr. Beauchamp were, “ I have made the inquiries, my dear sir, according to your request, and it is well worth the money. It will return, they say, four per cent. clear, which in these times is well enough.”

“ I have already determined upon it,” said Beauchamp, “ and have written to London about it.”

“ Ay, ay,” said the worthy doctor, “ just like all the rest of the world, my young friend—asking for advice, and acting without it.”

“ Not exactly,” answered Beauchamp ; “ you told me before what you thought upon the subject, and I knew you were not one to express an opinion except upon good grounds. The only question is now what lawyer I can employ here to arrange minor matters. The more im-

portant must, of course, be referred to my solicitors in London."

"We have no great choice," replied Dr. Miles; "there are but two in Tarningham, thank God. The one is a Mr. Wharton, the other a Mr. Bacon, neither of them particularly excellent specimens of humanity; but in the one, the body is better than the mind, in the other, the mind better than the body."

"Probably I should like the latter best," answered Beauchamp; "but pray, my dear doctor, give me a somewhat clearer knowledge of these two gentlemen for my guidance."

"Well then, though I do not love in general to say aught in disparagement of my neighbours behind their backs," Dr. Miles replied, "I must, I suppose, be more definite. Mr. Wharton is a quiet, silent man, gentlemanlike in appearance and in manners, cautious, plausible, and affecting friendship for his clients. I have never known him set the poor by the ears for the sake of small gains, or promote dissensions amongst farmers in order to make by a lawsuit. On the contrary, I have heard him dis-

suade from legal proceedings, and say that quarrels are very foolish things."

"A good sort of person," said Beauchamp.

"Hear the other side, my dear sir," rejoined the doctor; "such game as I have been speaking of is too small for him. He was once poor; he is now very rich. I have rarely heard of his having a client who somehow did not ruin himself; and although I do not by any means intend to say that I have been able distinctly to trace Mr. Wharton's hand in their destruction, certain it is that the bulk of the property—at least a large share of what they squandered or lost—has found its way into his possession. I have seen him always ready to smoothe men's way to ruin, to lend money, to encourage extravagance, to lull apprehension, to embarrass efforts at retrenchment, and then, when the beast was in the toils, to despatch it and take his share. No mercy then, when destruction is inevitable; the lawyer must be paid, and must be paid first."

"And now for Mr. Bacon?" said Beauchamp.

"Why he is simply a vulgar little man,"

answered the clergyman, "coarse in manners and in person: cunning and yet stolid, but with a competent knowledge of law: and keen at finding out faults and flaws. His practice is in an inferior line to the other's, but he is at all events safer, and I believe, more honest and sincere."

"How do you mean, cunning and stolid?" asked Beauchamp. "Those two qualities would seem to me incompatible."

"Oh, dear no," replied Dr. Miles; but before he could explain, the butler announced dinner; and as Sir John gave his arm to Mrs. Clifford, Beauchamp advanced towards Isabella. The doors were thrown wide open, and the party were issuing forth to cross the vestibule to the dining-room, when suddenly Sir John and his sister halted, encountered by an apparition which certainly was unexpected in the form that it assumed. In fact, they had not taken two steps out of the drawing-room ere the glass doors were flung open, and Ned Hayward stood before them, as unlike the Ned Hayward I first presented to the reader as possible. His coat

was covered with a dull whitish gray powder, his linen soiled, and apparently singed, his hands and face as black as soot, his glossy brown hair rugged and burnt, no hat upon his head, and in his arms a very pretty boy of about two years old, or a little more perhaps, on whose face were evident marks of recent tears, though he seemed now pacified, and was staring about with large eyes at the various objects in the grand house to which he was just introduced.

“Why Ned, Ned, Ned! what in the mischief’s name has happened to you?” exclaimed Sir John Slingsby. “Have you all at once become ‘a poor young man with a small family of young children?’”

“No, my dear sir,” answered Ned Hayward, in a hurried tone, “but if you have any women in the house, I will give this little fellow into their care, and tell you all about it in a few minutes. Hush, my little man, hush! We are all friends: we will take care of you. Now don’t cry again: no harm shall happen.”

“Women! to be sure!” cried Sir John;

"call the housekeeper, one of you rascals. Women! Hang it, Ned, do you think I could live in a house without women? A bottle of claret is not more necessary to my existence than the sight of a cap and a petticoat flying about the house—in the distance, Ned, in the distance! No brooms and dust-pans too near me; but, in a discreet position, far enough off, yet visible, woman is the sunshine of a house."

"Give him to me, Captain Hayward," said Miss Clifford, holding out her arms for the boy. "He will be quiet with me, I am sure. Won't you, my poor little fellow?"

The child gazed at her strangely as she took him, letting go Dr. Miles's arm to do so; but meeting the sweet smile that lighted up her beautiful face, he put his little arms round her neck the next moment, and hid his large blue eyes upon her shoulder. She held him kindly there, speaking a few gentle words to him, while Ned Hayward, looking round the party, addressed himself to the worthy clergyman, inquiring, "You are the rector of this parish, sir, I think?"

Dr. Miles made a stiff bow, not prepossessed in favour of any of Sir John Slingsby's old friends, and answered as briefly as possible, "I am, sir."

"Then can you tell me," asked the young gentleman, eagerly, "if there was any woman up at the cottage on the moor?"

Dr. Miles started, and replied with a look of much greater interest, "No, sir—no. What has happened? Why do you ask? What cottage do you mean? There are three."

"I mean the cottage of a man called Gimlet," answered Ned Hayward. "I saw some women's clothes—gowns and things; and I thought there might be a woman there, that's all.—There was none, then?"

"There was one six months ago," replied the clergyman, in a very grave tone, "as lovely a creature as ever was seen, but she lies in my churchyard, poor thing! She is at peace."

"Thank God," said Ned Hayward, in a tone of relief. "Ah, here comes somebody for the child. My good lady, will you have the kindness to take good care of this little fellow. See

that he is not burnt or hurt, and let him have some bread and milk, or things that children eat—I don't know very well what they are, but I dare say you do."

"Oh, by Jove! that she does!" exclaimed Sir John Slingsby; "she feeds half the children in the parish. You take good care of him, Mrs. Hope—and now, Ned," he continued, turning from the housekeeper to his guest, "what the devil's the meaning of all this?"

"I will tell you by and by, Sir John," answered Captain Hayward. "Pray go to dinner, and I will be down directly. Many apologies for being late; but it was not to be helped. I will not be ten minutes; but do not let me detain you——"

"But what is it all about? What has happened? Who the deuce is the child?" exclaimed Sir John. "Do you think either men or women can eat soup or digest fish with their stomachs full of curiosity?"

"By and by, Sir John, by and by," said Ned Hayward, making towards the stairs. "You

shall have the whole story for dessert. At present I am dirty, and the dinner's waiting. It will get cold, and your curiosity keep hot."

Thus saying he left them, and the rest of the party proceeded to dinner.

CHAPTER X.

IF you quit the high-road from Tarningham on the right-hand side by the little sandy path, just a hundred yards on the other side of the stone pump, equidistant from it and the milestone which marks on the hither side five miles and a half from Tarningham, and walk straight on, it leads you over the moor, and through the midst of scenery very common in England, not much loved by ordinary rambles, but which for me and a few others has a peculiar and almost indescribable charm. The ground is broken, undulated, full of deep sand-pits and holes, frequently covered with gorse and heath, spotted occasionally with self-sown shrubs, a

stunted hawthorn here and there, two or three melancholy firs, gathered together on the top of a mound, like a party of weary watchers trying to console each other by close companionship, while from time to time a few light birches, with their quivering leaves, thin, graceful arms, and ragged coats of silver and brown, are seen hanging over the edge of a bank, or decorating the side of a hollow. If you dip down into one of the low dells, a sensation of hermit-like solitude comes upon you. You believe that there at least you may be,

The world forgetting, by the world forgot;

and you feel an irresistible desire to sit down at the foot of this shrub, or that, where the roots, like the members of a well-governed state, serve to keep together, in close union, the light and incoherent materials that sustain them, and there to commune with your own thoughts in the silent presence of Nature. If you mount one of the little hills, the scene and the sensation are very different. The solitude is as deep, as striking; no living thing is to be

seen, unless it be a wild curlew, with its thin arched wings, whirling away with a shrill cry in the enjoyment of its own loneliness; but there is an expansion, a grandeur, a strange sublimity in the extent of waste, with the long lines waving off in different hues like the billows of the ocean, first yellow sand, and green short turf; then a brown mass, where the sight loses its distinctness, then perhaps a gleam of water, then a blue line, deep as indigo, where the azure air and the black shade mingle together under some threatening cloud; then long undulations of purple, fainter and fainter, till who shall say where earth ends and sky begins. The bleakness, the stillness, the solitariness, the varied colouring, the vast extent, the very monotony of the forms mingle together in a whole that has not less grandeur in it than the highest mountain that ever raised its proud brow above its brother giants.

I have said you would have to go straight on, but what I said was quite untrue, and it is wonderful how many small falsehoods slip out of the innocent and unconscious pen, either in

the haste of writing—which is very pardonable—or for the sake of a little graceful turn, a neat expression, or a pretty figure, which is not so small a fault. I do not believe there were ever ten sentences written by poet, historian, or romance-writer, in ancient or modern times, that had not some lie in them, direct or implied. I stand self-convicted. It is not true that you would have to go straight-forward; for if you did you would walk into a pond, and moreover, might never chance to get out again; for what between rushes and reeds, and weeds and water-lilies, to say nothing of sundry deep holes at the bottom, there is every risk that you would get your feet entangled, and plunge head foremost into a place where you could neither swim nor disengage yourself. No, the path does not go straight-forward. Of all man's circuitous ways—and every one who knows the human heart, is well aware that it is too fond of crooked paths ever to pursue a straight-forward course in anything—of all man's circuitous ways, I say, there never was one more serpentine or meandering than that which leads

from the high-road upon the moor. First it turns round that pond I have mentioned, then it glides about the base of a little hill, then it forces its way in a slanting direction, through a bank of sand, then it turns aside from a deep pit, then it respectfully passes at a little distance from a tumulus, where sleep the ashes of the forgotten brave; and even when it gets upon the flat green turf, it twists about like a great snake, giving sad indications of man's vagabond fancies that lead him hither and thither, without rhyme or reason, wherever he may be going, and whatever may be the object before him.

But after all, why should he not be thus led? why should he not follow these fancies? Life's but a walk over a moor, and the wild-flowers that grow upon our path are too few not to gather them when they come within sight, even though it cost us a step or two aside. It's all in the day's journey, and we shall get home at last.

Yet it is curious to consider all these various bends and turnings in any little foot-way such

as that we are now following. There is very often a reason for that which seems to us to be the effects of mere caprice. Now, why did the fellow who first beat this road with his wandering foot, turn away here to the right, when it is as evident as the sun at noonday (that's to say, in fine weather,) that his object was to pass straight between those two little hillocks before us? Oh, I see, the grass is very green there; there is either some little spring, or else the ground is soft and marshy in wet weather, and so he went round to avoid it. But if he did so, why did he not keep to the right of the hillock—that one with the hawthorn upon it, which is now in flower, scenting the solitary air with a perfume that no art could ever extract? Could it be to take a look at that wide view over the tall, magnificent trees of the park, with the wide-spread country beyond, and the little tower of Tarningham church, rising up between those tall silver poplars? Perhaps it might be so; for there is an inherent sense of the picturesque in the breast of most men, which, unlike any acquired taste,

grows and refines, and becomes stronger and more overpowering the more it is indulged, and the more opportunities of indulgence that it has. It is perhaps the only thing of which it can be truly said that "increase of appetite grows by that it feeds on." And it is a beautiful scene, too, which might well tempt one a little out of the way. As to the rest, it is clear enough, that when he had got there—the first wanderer over the moor, I mean—he was obliged to turn away to the right, in order to come into the proper direction again, so that here are four of his deviations completely accounted for, and indeed, dear reader, I cannot help thinking, that if we were once or twice in life to examine curiously the motives of our own actions, or even of others, taking care to be impartial in both cases, we should find cause to cast away our critical spirit, and to believe that there are very often good and rational reasons for a turn to the right or a turn to the left, which we have been inclined to blame, simply because we did not perceive what those reasons were. Oh, charity, charity, rightly

understood in thy largest and holiest sense, what a beautiful thing thou art! and did men but practise thee, how often should we be spared the crime and folly of condemning unwisely and unjustly!

But to return to my path: upon my life, after having regained the direction, the fellow had followed it straight on for more than a quarter of a mile. It is wonderful, it is marvellous! I never saw such a thing before! But, nevertheless, it is true that there was nothing either to attract or drive him to one side or the other: and then, as if to make up for lost time, what zig-zags he takes afterwards! Round that clump of firs, under that bank, through between the birch trees, here and there over the wildest part of the moor, till he passes close by the edge of that deep sand-pit, which must have rested a long time since it contributed any of its crumbling particles to strew the floor of the public-house, or sprinkle the passage of the cottage; for the bushes are growing thick down the slope, and there seems as if there had been a little

kitchen-garden in the bottom, and a human habitation.

In the reign of that King George under whose paternal sceptre flourished the English nation in the times whereof I am writing, there was a cottage in that sand-pit, a small lonely house, built of timber, laths, and mud, and containing two or three rooms. The materials, as I have shown, were poor; ease and comfort seemed far from it; yet there was something altogether not unpleasant in the idea of dwelling in that sheltered nook, with the dry sand and the green bushes round, and feeling, that let the wind rave as it would over the hill, let it bend down the birch trees, and make the pines rustle and crack, and strike their branches against each other, the fury of the tempest could not reach one there—that let the rain pour down in ever such heavy torrents, as if the windows of Heaven were open, the thirsty ground would drink up the streams as they fell, as if its drought were insatiable. There were signs of taste, too, about the building, of a humble and natural kind.

Over the door had been formed with some labour a little sort of trellised portico, of rough wood-work, like an arbour, and upon this had been trained several plants of the wild-hop and the wild clematis, with one solitary creeping garden-rose. Sticks had been placed across the house, too, to afford a stay for these shrubs to spread themselves over the face of the cottage, if they had any strength to spare when they had covered the little portico, and two or three wandering shoots, like truant children, were already sporting along the fragile path thus afforded them.

The interior of the house was less prepossessing than the outside; the mud-floor, hard beaten down and very equally flattened, was dry enough, for the sand below it carried off all moisture; but in the walls of the rooms there was, alas! many a flaw through which sun or moon might shine, or the night-wind enter; and to say the truth, the inhabitants of the cottage were as much indebted to the banks of the pit for protection against such a cold visitant, as to the construction of their

dwelling. The furniture was scanty and rude, seeming to have been made by a hand not altogether unaccustomed to the use of a carpenter's tools, but hastily and carelessly, so that in gazing round the sleeping-chamber, one was inclined to imagine that the common tent-bed which stood in one corner, was the only article that had ever tenanted a shop. The great chest, the table, the two or three chairs, all spoke plainly the same artificer, and had that been all that the room contained, it would have looked very miserable indeed; but hanging from nails driven into the wall, were a number of very peculiar ornaments. There was a fox's head and a fox's brush, dried, and in good preservation; there was the gray skin of a badger, and the brown skin of an otter; birds of prey of various sizes and descriptions, the butcher-bird, the sparrow-hawk, and the buzzard, as well as several owls. Besides these zoological specimens, were hung up in the same manner a number of curious implements, the properties and applications of some of which were easy to divine, while others re-

mained mysterious. There were two or three muzzles for dogs, which could be distinguished at once, but then by their side was a curious looking contrivance, which appeared to be a Lilliputian wire-mousetrap, sewn on to some straps of leather. Then came a large coil of wire, a dog's collar, and a pair of greyhound slips. Next appeared something difficult to describe, having two saw-like jaws of iron, like a rat-trap, supported on semi-circular bars which were fixed into a wooden handle, having a spring on the outside, and a revolving plate within. It was evident that the jaws could be opened and kept open in case of need, and had I been a hare, a rabbit, or any other delicate-footed animal, I should not have liked to trust my ankle within their gripe. I could describe several other instruments both of leather and iron, which were similarly suspended from the wall; but as I really cannot tell the reader what was the use of any one of them, it would be but labour thrown away. However, there were other things, the intent and purport of which were quite self-evident.

Two or three small cages, a landing-net, fishing-rods, a gun, powder-flasks, shot-belts, a casting-net, and a clap-net, and by the side of the window hung four small cages, containing singing-birds.

But who was he in the midst of all this strange assortment? Was he the owner of this wild, lonely dwelling? Oh, no! it was a young man, dressed as none could be dressed who frequented not very different scenes from those that lay around him. His clothes were not only those of a gentleman, but those of a gentleman who thought much of his own personal appearance—too much, indeed, to be perfectly gentlemanly. All that the tailor, the boot-maker, the hat-maker could do had been done to render the costume correct according to the fashion of the day; but there was a certain something which may be called a too-smartness about it all—the colours were too bright, the cut too decidedly fashionable, to be quite in good taste. Neither was the arrangement of the hues altogether harmonious. There are the same colours in a China-aster and a

rose, but yet what a difference in the appearance of the two flowers; and the same sort of difference, though not to the same extent, existed between the dress of the person before us and that of the truly well-dressed man, even of his own time. In most other respects, his appearance was good; he was tall, rather slightly formed than otherwise, and had none of that stiffness and rigidity which might have been anticipated from his apparel. Demeanour is almost always tinged more or less by character, and a wild, rash, vehement disposition, will, as in his case, give a freedom to the movements which no drilling can altogether do away with. His features in themselves were not bad; but the whole countenance was disfigured by a black silk shade which covered the right eye, and a fresh scar all the way down the same side of the nose, while from underneath the shade, which was not large enough for its purpose, peeped out sundry rainbow rings of blue and yellow, invading both the cheek and the temple.

By these marks the reader has already per-

ceived that this gentleman has been presented to him before, but in a very different garb, which he had thought fit to assume for his own particular purposes on the preceding night; and now he sat in the cottage of Stephen Gimlet the poacher, judging it expedient to keep himself at a distance from the peopled haunts of man, during the bright and bustling day at least. At night he proposed to betake himself to the inn which had been mentioned in his conversation with the housekeeper; but after his pleasant and hopeful conversation with his father, he had ridden straight to the dwelling of his companion, Wolf, where, on the preceding day, his portmanteaus had been left, after they had arranged their plans; and having stabled his horse in a shed at the back of the building, he had there passed the heavy hours of darkness, partly in bitter meditations, and partly in conversation with his comrade. Sleep could hardly be said to have visited his eyelids, for though, after he cast himself down to rest, he had dozed from time to time, yet agitating thoughts continually returned, and deprived him of all real repose.

At an early hour of the morning, and while it was still dark, Ste Gimlet had gone out, as was his wont; and rising with the first rays of the sun, Henry Wittingham employed himself in dressing with scrupulous care, and then filled up about half an hour more in making a black patch to hide his disfigured eye, out of an old silk handkerchief. When this was accomplished, wanting something or another to tie this covering in its right place, he looked round the room, but in vain. Leather straps, dog-collars, rat-traps, brass wire, would none of them do, and although near the nets there was lying a ball of whip-cord, he thought that such a decoration as a string made with that material would but ill accord with the rest of his habiliments. He therefore walked across the little passage to the next room, and lifted the coarse wooden latch of the door. He found the door locked, however, and muttering to himself, "D——n the fellow, did he think I would steal anything?" he was turning away, when a small sweet voice from within exclaimed, "I'm ready, daddy; I've got my stockings on."

"Oh, he's locked the child in—that's it," said Henry Wittingham, to himself, and then raising his voice, he said, "Your daddy's not come back, Charley; so lie still and be quiet."

Then returning to the next room, the brilliant thought struck him of cutting off the hem of the old silk handkerchief to make a string for the black patch, which task being accomplished, and all complete, he sat down, and thought.

Oh, how many sorts of misery there are in the world! In giving to man his fine organization, in raising him above the brute by delicate structure, by intellect, by imagination, and by infinitely extended hope and long persisting memory, nature, indeed, did afford him inexhaustible sources of enjoyment, but at the same time laid him open on every side to the attack of evils. In perfect innocence, indeed, man and his whole race might find nearly perfect happiness. The Garden of Eden is but a type of the moral Paradise of a perfectly virtuous state; but the moment that Sin entered, the thorns and briers grew up to tear all feet; and the

very capabilities of refined happiness became the defenceless points for pain and wretchedness to assail us. Infinite, indeed, are their attacks, and innumerable the forms that they assume; but of all the shapes of misery, what is to be more dreaded, what is more terrible than thought to a vicious mind? And there he sat in thought, with the morning sunshine streaming around him—calm, and pure, and tranquil. What did he think of? Where did his meditations rest? On the happiness that was passed away, on the gay hours of childhood, on the sports of his boyish days, on the times when the world was young for him, and everything was full of freshness and enjoyment? Or did he think of the blessing cast away,—of wealth, and comfort, and ease, with no reasonable wish ungratified, no virtuous pleasure denied? Or did he look forward to the future with fear and anguish, and to the past with remorse and grief? Heaven only knows! but there he sat, with his head bent forward, his brow contracted, his teeth tight shut, his right arm fallen listlessly by his side,

his left hand contracting and expanding involuntarily upon some fragments of silk on the table. He gazed forward through the window, from under his bent brows. He saw not the sunshine, but he felt it, and loved it not; and ever and anon the dark shadows of strong emotion crossed his countenance, like misty clouds swept over the face of the mountain. He sat long, and was at heart impatient for his companion's return; but so strong was the hold which thought had got upon him, he knew not how time went. He heard not even the child cry in the neighbouring room, when, wearied with waiting, it got terrified at the unusual length of his father's absence.

The stout form of the poacher was at length seen descending the small steep path which led from the moor into the sand-pit. His step was slow and heavy, his air dull and discontented; but Harry Wittingham, as soon as he beheld him, started up, and opened the door of the cottage, exclaiming, "Well, Wolf, what news?"

"Neither the best in the world nor the worst," answered the man, somewhat sullenly.

"And what have you got for breakfast?" inquired the young gentleman; "I am as hungry as the devil!"

"You must wait a bit, though," answered Wolf, descending; "I must look after the boy first. Poor little man, I dare say he has cried his eyes out—I've been so long. But if you're in a great hurry, you'd better light the fire, Master Harry; you'll find some wood in the corner there, and you can strike a light with the pistol flint."

Harry Wittingham did not look well pleased, and turning into the house again, walked to the window, and affected to hum a tune, without undertaking the menial office that the other had assigned him. In the meanwhile, Wolf walked straight to the other door, unlocked it, and catching up the beautiful boy, who was sitting, half-dressed, on a stool, crying, he pressed him eagerly to his breast, and kissed him once or twice. There were strange and salutary thoughts passed through his brain at that moment. He asked himself what would have become of that child if he had been detained and taken to prison, as, indeed, had

been very likely. Who would have let the boy out of that solitary room—who would have given him food—who would have nursed and tended him? And once or twice, while he was finishing what the child's tiny hands had left undone in attempting to dress himself, the father rubbed his brow, and thought heavily. Say what man will of the natural affections, they are the best ties to good conduct.

When he had done, he took the boy by the hand and led him into the other room, gave a glance to the fire-place, and then to Harry Wittingham, as he stood at the window, and his brow gathered into a frown. He said nothing, however, lighted the fire himself, and taking the fish from his pocket, proceeded to broil them. Then, from the great chest he drew out a knife or two, a cut loaf of coarse bread, and two or three glasses, which he placed upon the table, and giving his child a large hunch of the bread, told him, in a whisper, as if it were a mighty secret, that he should have a nice trout in a minute. To Harry Wittingham he said not a word, till at length, the

other turning round, exclaimed, "Well, Wolf, you have not told me what news you bring."

"And you have not lighted the fire!" said Ste Gimlet. "If you think, Master Wittingham, that you can live in a place like this and keep your hands clean, you are mistaken. You must shape your manners to your company, or give it up."

Harry Wittingham felt inclined to make an angry answer; but recollecting how much he was in his companion's power, prudence came to his aid, and he only replied, "Pooh, pooh, Wolf! I am not accustomed to light fires, and I do not know how to set about it."

"Faith, you may have to learn some day," answered his comrade. "When I built all this house, and made all these chairs and tables with my own hands, I knew as little about a trade I never thought to practise, as you about this."

"Ay, you have practised many a trade in your day," said Harry Wittingham, "and I never but one."

"Nor that a very good one," murmured

Wolf to himself; but the storm thus passed away for the time, and the trout were broiled and put in a plate, from which the two men and the little boy made each a hearty meal.

The magistrate's son suffered their breakfast to pass over without any further inquiry respecting the tidings which his companion had obtained in his morning's expedition; but after Ste Gimlet had produced a bottle of very fine white brandy, which certainly had not turned pale at the sight of a custom-house officer, and each of the men had taken a glass mixed with some of the cold water which formed the purer beverage of the child, the poacher vouchsafed the information, unasked, relating to Harry Wittingham a great part of what had taken place between himself and Ned Hayward. What he did not relate he probably thought of no consequence, though men's opinions might differ upon that subject; but at all events, Harry Wittingham gathered that he had been met and narrowly escaped being apprehended by a man, who had questioned him closely about the adventures of the

night before, and who was acquainted with his name, and the share he had had in a somewhat perilous and disgraceful enterprise.

Such tidings cast Wolf's companion into another fit of dark and gloomy thought, in which he remained for about five minutes without uttering a word; but then he gave a start, and looked up with a gleam of satisfaction on his face, as if some new and pleasant conclusion had suddenly presented itself to his mind.

"I'll tell you what, Ste," he said, "I've just thought of something. You must go down to Tarningham for me, and gather all the news you can about this fellow—find out who he is, and whether he is a London beak or not; and then, when you have done all that——"

"I shall do none of it, Master Harry," answered the poacher; "I won't stir another step in this business—I don't like it, sir; it's not in my way. I undertook it just to please you for old companionship's sake, and because you told me the young lady would have no objection; and then when I was in it, I went through

with it, though I saw well enough that she liked the thought of going as much as I should like to dance on a rope. But I will have no more to do with it now ; it has done me enough harm already, and now I shall be watched ten times closer than ever, and lose my living—so go, I do not.”

“ Come, come, Wolf, there’s a good fellow—this is all nonsense,” said Harry Wittingham, in a coaxing tone.

But the man cut him short, repeating sternly that he would not go.

“ Then, by ——, I will go myself,” exclaimed the young gentleman, with a blasphemous oath ; “ if you are afraid, I am not.”

And, starting up, he walked out of the cottage, took his way round to the shed at the back, trampling upon several of the flowers, which the poacher loved to cultivate, as he went ; and in about a quarter of an hour he was seen riding up the little path towards the moor.

After he was gone, Ste Gimlet remained for some time in very thoughtful mood : now gazing

idly at vacancy, now playing with the child's hair, or answering its infantine questions with an abstracted air. At length he muttered, "What's to be done now?" and then added aloud, "well, something must be done. Go out and play in the garden, Charley."

The child toddled out right gladly, and the poacher set himself down to mend his bird-net; but ever and anon he laid down the cunning meshes on his knee, and let his thoughts entangle themselves in links not less intricate.

"I'll try the other thing," he said, after a time; "this does not do. I should not care for myself, but it's the poor baby. Poor dear Mary! That always rested on her heart, what I should do with the boy when she was gone. Well, I'll try and do better. Perhaps she is looking down on us—who knows?"

And then he fell to his work again with a sigh. He employed himself with several things for two or three hours. He finished the net; he made a wicker-basket—it was the first he had ever attempted, but he did it better than might have been expected, and then he called

the boy in to his dinner, giving him a trout he had saved when he broiled the others. For his own part, he contented himself with a lump of the bread. When that was done, he went and caught some small birds on the moor, just above the edge of the pit, where he could see the child playing below. When he had thus provided their light supper—for the luxury of tea was unknown in Ste Gimlet's cottage, he came back and sat down by the boy, and played with him fondly for several minutes, gazing at him with a melancholy earnestness, which mingled even with the smile of joy and pride that lighted his eyes, as some movement of childish grace called forth the beauties of his child. Nevertheless, from time to time, there was a sort of absent look; and twice he went up to the bank above, and gazed out over the moor towards Tarningham. At length he went away far enough to climb to the top of the neighbouring barrow or tumulus, after having told the boy not to venture up the path. From the position in which he then stood, he had a fair view of the scene I have already described,

and caught the windings of the high road down the hill more distinctly than from below.

“I shouldn’t wonder if they had caught him,” said Wolf to himself with a frown, and an anxious expression of countenance, “and then he will say it was my fault, and that I was afraid to go, and all that!—Hang it! why should I care what he says or what he thinks?” And with this reflection he turned round and went back homeward. He found the boy at the top of the bank, however, and gave him a gentle shake, scolding him till the big drops began to gather in his large blue eyes.

Stephen Gimlet was not satisfied with himself, and scolding the child he found did not act as a diversion to his own self-reproaches. After he had set his son playing again, he walked about moodily for near a quarter of an hour, and then burst forth impetuously, saying,

“I can’t stand this ; I must go and see what’s become of him—they’ll know at the turnpike if he’s passed, and the old woman won’t blab. Here, Charley, boy, you must go and play in the house now—it’s growing late, and I’m going

away—I shan't be long, and you shall have the bird-cages to play with."

The boy seemed to be well accustomed to it, and trotted away to the house before his father, without any signs of reluctance. He was placed in the same room where he had been in the morning, some empty bird-cages and two or three other things were given him for his amusement, and locking the door of the chamber, the poacher walked away, saying with a sigh, "There can no harm happen this time, for I am going to do no wrong to any one."

Vain, however, are all such calculations. The faults and virtues of others, as well as our own faults and virtues, enter into the strange composition of our fate, and affect us darkly and mysteriously, in a manner which we can never foresee.

The poacher had left his own door about a quarter of an hour, when two men took their way down into the sand-pit, the one on horse-back, the other on foot. Harry Wittingham fastened his horse's bridle to the latch of the door, and going in with his companion, looked

round for Wolf, then crossing over to the other chamber, and finding it locked, he said—

“Stephen isn’t here. There, take that up, and be off with it;” and he pointed to his portmanteau in the corner where it lay.

The other man, who seemed a common farm-servant, or one of the inferior stable-men of an inn, got the portmanteau on his shoulder, and walked away with it; and Harry Wittingham remained for a minute or two with his hands behind his back looking out of the window. At the end of that time he said aloud: “Well, it’s no use waiting for him; we should only have a row, I dare say, so I’ll be off, too.”

Before he went, however, he looked round the place for a moment, with an expression of mockery and contempt. What was in his bosom, it would be difficult to say, for the heart of man is full of strange things. Perhaps he felt it unpleasant to be under an obligation to the owner of that poor tenement, even for a night’s shelter, and strove to salve the wound of pride by reducing the obligation to the lowest point in his own estimation. He

might think that the misery he saw around did not make it a very desirable resting-place, and that he had little to be thankful for in having been permitted to share a beggar's hut. His eyes, as he gazed around, fell upon some embers of smouldering wood on the hearth, and that called to mind one of the many bad habits which he had lately acquired, and in which he had not yet indulged through the whole of that day. He accordingly put his hand in his pocket, and pulled out some cigars, then not very common in England. Next taking up with the tongs a piece of the charred and still burning wood, he lighted one of the rolls of weed, cast down the ember, and threw the tongs back upon the hearth ; after which, mounting his horse, he cantered away as blithely as if his heart had been innocent as a child's.

The ember fell upon the earthen floor, where, under ordinary circumstances, it could do no harm ; but it so happened that Stephen Gimlet, when he had done mending the net, had cast down the hank of twine close by the table.

A long end of the string had fallen towards the fire-place, and a moment or two after Henry Wittingham had quitted the cottage, the piece of charred wood itself became black, but a small spot of fire was seen close to it, and a thin filmy curl of smoke arose. It went on smouldering for about five minutes, creeping forwards inch by inch, and then a gust of wind through the door, which Harry Wittingham had left open, fanned it, and a flame broke out. Then it ran rapidly along, and caught the hank of twine, which was in a blaze in a moment. It spared the netting-needle, which was of hard box-wood, and for an instant seemed to promise to go out of itself; but then the flame leaped up, and the meshes of the net, which had been left partly on the table, partly on a chair, showed a spark here and there, flashed with the flame, and then, oh, how eagerly the greedy element commenced devouring all that it could meet with! Wherever there was a piece of wood-work it seized upon it; the table, the chair, the poles of the net, the upright posts of the wall, the beams of the roof,

the thatch itself, and then instantly a cloud of dull black smoke, mixed with sparks, rose up upon the moor, from the sand-pit. The heat became intense, the smoke penetrated into the other chamber, the sparks began to fall before the window, a red light spread around, and then the terrified screams of a child were heard.

About a quarter of an hour before, a gentleman had appeared upon the moor, from the side of Sir John Slingsby's park. He had come up the hill as if he were walking for a wager, for there was something in the resistance of the acclivity to his progress, which made the vigorous spirit of youth and health resolute to conquer it triumphantly. When the feat was done, however, and the hill passed as if it had been a piece of level ground, Ned Hayward slackened his pace and looked about him; enjoyed to the full all that the wide expanse had of grand and fine, breathed freer in the high air, and let the spirit of solitary grandeur sink into his heart. He had none of the affected love of the picturesque and the

sublime, which make the folks who assume the poetical so ridiculous. He was rather inclined to check what people call fine feelings than not ; he was disposed to fancy himself, and to make other people fancy him, a very commonplace sort of person, and he would not have gone into an ecstasy for the world, even at the very finest thing that the world ever produced ; but he could not help, for the life of him, feeling everything that was beautiful and great, more than he altogether liked, so that, when in society, he passed it off with a touch of persiflage, putting that sort of shield over what he felt to be a vulnerable point. Now, however, when he happened to be alone, he let Nature have her way, and holding his riding-whip by both ends, walked here and walked there, gazing at the prospect where he could get a sight of it, and looking to the right and the left, as if not to let any point of loveliness escape him. His eyes soon fell upon the little tumulus already mentioned, with the sentinel fir-trees keeping guard upon the top, and thinking that there must be a good look-out from that high

position, he walked slowly up, and gazed over the park towards Tarningham. Suddenly, however, his eyes were drawn to the other side, as a cloud of white smoke came rolling up out of the sand-pit.

"Ha, ha!" he said, "my friend Master Wolf lighting his fire, I suppose."

But the smoke increased. Ned Hayward thought he saw some sparks rising over the bushes. A sudden sensation of apprehension crossed his mind, and he walked rapidly down the side of the hillock, and crossed the intervening space with a step quick in reality, though intended to appear leisurely; but in a moment a cloud of deeper-coloured smoke, tinged with flame, burst up into the evening air, and he sprang forward at full speed. A few bounds brought him to the side of the pit; and, as he reached it, a scream met his ear. It was the easily recognised voice of childhood, in terror or in pain, and Ned Hayward hesitated not an instant. There was a path down a couple of hundred yards away to the left, but the scene before his eyes counselled no delay.

There was the cottage, with the farther part of the thatch all in a blaze, the window of the room beneath it fallen in, and the flame rushing forth, a cloud of smoke issuing from the door, and scream after scream proceeding from the nearer end of the building. His riding-whip was cast down at once, and grasping the stem of the birch tree rooted in the very edge, he swung himself over, thinking to drop upon a sloping part of the bank about ten feet below. The filmy roots of the shrub, however, had not sufficient hold upon the sandy soil to sustain his weight; the tree bent, gave way, and came down over him with a part of the bank, so that he and his frail support rolled together to the bottom of the pit. He was up in an instant, however—he might be hurt or he might not, he knew nothing about it—but the shrill cry of the child rang in his ear, and he darted forward to the cottage doorway. It was full of fire, and dark with suffocating vapour, but in he rushed, scorching his hair, hands, his face, and his clothes. He found the other door blackened, and in some

places alight with the encroaching fire ; tried to open it, but failed, and then shouted aloud, " Keep back, keep back ! and I will burst it open ;" and then, setting his foot against it, he cast it with a vigorous effort into the room. A momentary glance around showed him the child, who had crept as near to the window as possible, and, darting forward, Ned Hayward caught the boy up in his arms, and rushed out with him, covering his head with his arm, that none of the beams, which were beginning to fall, might strike him as they passed ; then setting him down on the green turf when they were at a little distance, he asked eagerly, " Are there any more ?"

The child, however, stupified with terror, gazed in his face and cried bitterly, but answered not. Seeing he could obtain no reply, Ned Hayward ran back to the cottage, and tried to go in again, but it was now impossible ; the whole way was blocked up with burning rafters, and large detached masses of the thatch, which had fallen in, and were now sending up vast showers of sparks, as the wind stirred them.

He hurried to the window, and looked in, and though the small panes were cracking with the heat, he forced it open, and shouted at the extreme pitch of his voice, to drown the rushing sound of the fire, "Is there any one within?"

There was no answer; and the moment after, the dry beams being burnt away, and the support at the other end gone, the whole thatch above gave way, and fell into the room, while the flame rushed up into a spire as it descended.

The heat was now intolerable, and forced a retreat to a distance. Captain Hayward took the boy up in his arms, and strove to soothe him and gain some information from him. It was all in vain, however; and after a moment's thought, the gentleman said to himself, "I will carry him away to Tarningham House. Jack Slingsby will never refuse him food and shelter, I am sure, and in case there should be any one else in the place, it is vain to hope that one could save them now. We can send up people to look for the bodies. But let us see what's at the back of the house." He accordingly walked round, still carrying the boy in his arms,

but found nothing there, except a low detached shed, which seemed in security, as the wind blew the other way. A long trough and spout, indeed, between the shed and the cottage, appeared in a somewhat perilous position, and as it was likely that they might lead the fire to the building yet uninjured, Ned Hayward thought fit to remove them before he left the ground. This cost him some trouble, as they were rooted in the sand ; but when it was once accomplished, he took up the boy again, sought his hat, but could not find it, and crossing the moor, entered the western gates of Sir John Slingsby's park, without meeting any one from whom he could obtain information, or to whom he could communicate the event which had just occurred.

CHAPTER XI.

THE events detailed in the last chapter, or at least that portion of them in which he himself had borne a share, were related by Ned Hayward to the party at Sir John Slingsby's after he had rejoined them at the dinner-table, having done his best to remove the traces of his adventure from his personal appearance. The smoke and sand were washed away, the burnt and singed garments had been changed for others, and Ned Hayward still appeared a very good-looking fellow, not the less interesting, perhaps, in the eyes of the ladies there present for all that he had done and suffered. Nevertheless, the fine wavy curls of his brown hair,

which had been burnt off, were not to be recovered in so short a time, and both his hands showed evident signs of having been injured by the fire. He was in high spirits, for the assurance that there could be nobody else in the cottage but the boy, unless it were Gimlet the poacher himself, of which there was no probability, had relieved the young gentleman's mind of a heavy weight, and, jesting gaily with Sir John Slingsby, who vowed that, with those hands of his, he would not be able to throw a line for a fortnight, he replied, that he would undertake to catch the finest trout in the whole water before noon the next day.

"And now, my dear sir," he continued, turning to the clergyman, "as you seem to know something of this good gentleman, Gimlet, and his affairs, I wish you'd give me a little insight into his history."

"It is a sad and not uncommon one," answered Dr. Miles, gravely, "and I will tell it you some other time. My poor parishioners have a superstitious feeling about that pit, and that cottage, for a man was murdered there

some years ago. You will find multitudes of people who will vouch for his ghost having been seen sitting on the bank above, and under a solitary birch-tree."

"It wont sit there any more," answered Ned Hayward, laughing, "for the birch-tree and I rolled down into the pit together, as I tried to drop down by its help, thinking it was quite strong enough to support me."

"Then I am afraid the ghost is gone altogether for the future," said Dr. Miles, in a tone of some regret.

"Afraid! my dear doctor," exclaimed Miss Slingsby; "surely you do not want ghosts among your parishioners?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Sir John Slingsby, with a merry, fat, overflowing chuckle. "Isabella means, doctor, that you may make your flock as spiritual as you please, but not reduce them quite to spectres."

"No, papa, you are a wrong interpreter," rejoined his daughter; "I meant to say, that of all men on earth, I should have thought Dr. Miles was the last to patronise a ghost."

"I don't know, my dear," replied the worthy clergyman, "a ghost is sometimes very serviceable in a parish. We are but children of a bigger growth, and a bugbear is as necessary sometimes for great babies as small ones; not that I ever used it or should use it; but the people's own imagination did that for me. I have heard, Sir John, that some men when they were lying out to shoot your deer, were scared away by one of them fancying he saw the ghost, and you saved two good haunches of venison, to say nothing of the pasty."

"By Jove, that was a jolly ghost indeed," answered Sir John Slingsby; "and I'll give him a crown the first time I meet him. Doctor, a glass of wine."

"If ghosts had such effects upon poachers," said Beauchamp, who had been speaking in a low tone to Miss Slingsby, "how happens it that this man, the father of the boy whom Captain Hayward brought hither, fixed his abode in the spirit's immediate neighbourhood?"

"Oh, he is a sad unbelieving dog," said Dr. Miles; but then suddenly checking himself, he

added, "and yet in that I do him injustice ; there is some good in the man, and a great deal of imagination. Half his faults proceed from an ill-disciplined fancy ; but the truth is, being a very fearless fellow, and of this imaginative disposition, I believe he would just as soon have a ghost for a next door neighbour as not. Therefore, I do not suppose that it was from any doubt of the reality of the apparition, but rather in defiance of it, that he set up his abode there ; and perhaps he thought, too, that it might serve as a sort of safeguard to him, a protection against the intrusion of persons less bold than himself, at those hours when ghosts and he himself are wont to wander. He knew well that none of the country people would come near him then, for all the ignorant believe in apparitions more or less."

"Now, dear Dr. Miles, do tell me," cried Isabella Slingsby with a gay laugh, "whether some of the learned do not believe in them, too. If it were put as a serious question to the Rev. Dr. Miles himself, whether he had not a little quiet belief at the bottom of his heart

in the appearance of ghosts, what would he answer?"

"That he had never seen one, my dear," replied the clergyman, with a good-humoured smile; "but at the same time I must say that a belief in the occasional appearance of the spirits of the dead for particular purposes, is a part of our religion. I have no idea of a man calling himself a Christian and taking what parts of the Bible he likes, and rejecting or explaining away the rest. The fact of the re-appearance of dead people on this earth is more than once mentioned in Scripture, and therefore I believe that it has taken place. The purposes for which it was permitted in all the instances there noticed, were great and momentous, and it may very possibly be that since the Advent of Our Saviour, no such deviations from usual laws have been requisite. Of that, however, I can be no judge; but at all events my own reason tells me, that it is not probable a spirit should be allowed to revisit the glimpses of the moon for the purpose of making an old woman say her prayers, or frightening a village girl into fits."

"You are speaking alone of the apparition of the spirits of the dead," said Mr. Beauchamp; "did you ever hear of the appearance of the spirits of the living?"

"Not without their bodies, surely!" said Miss Clifford.

"Oh, yes, my dear Mary," answered Dr. Miles, "such things are recorded, I can assure you, ay, and upon testimony so strong that it is impossible to doubt that the witnesses believed what they related, whether the apparition was a delusion of their own fancy or not—indeed, it is scarcely possible to suppose that it was a delusion, for in several instances the thing, whatever it was, made itself visible to several persons at once, and they all precisely agreed in the description of it."

"One of the most curious occurrences of the kind that ever I heard of," said Beauchamp, "was told me by a German gentleman to whom it happened. It was the case of a man seeing his own spirit, and although we are continually told we ought to know ourselves, few men have ever had such an opportunity of doing so as this gentleman."

"Oh, do tell us the whole story, Mr. Beauchamp," cried Isabella, eagerly; "I must beg and entreat that you would not tantalize us with a mere glimpse of such a delightful vision, and then let fall the curtain again."

"My dear Bella, you are tantalizing him," exclaimed her father. "Don't you see that you are preventing him from eating his dinner; at all events, we will have a glass of wine first; shall it be Hermitage, Mr. Beauchamp? I have some of 1808, the year before that rascal, Napoleon, mixed all the vintages together."

The wine was drunk, but immediately this was accomplished, Isabella renewed her attack, calling upon Mr. Beauchamp for the story, and in her eagerness laying one round taper finger upon his arm as he sat beside her, to impress more fully her commands upon him, as she said, "I must and will have the story, Mr. Beauchamp."

"Assuredly," he replied, in his usual quiet tone; "but first of all, I must premise one or two things, that you may give it all the weight it deserves. The gentleman who told it to me

was, at the time of my acquaintance with him, a man of about seventy years of age, very simple in his manners, and, however excitable his fancy might have been in youth, he was at the time I speak of, as unimaginative a person as it is possible to conceive. He assured me most solemnly, as an old man upon the verge of eternity, that every word he spoke was truth; and now I will tell it as nearly in his own language as I can, and my memory is a very retentive one. You must remember, however, that it is he who is speaking, and not I; and fancy us sitting together, the old man and the young one, warming ourselves by a stove on a winter's night, in the fine old town of Nuremberg."

The Old Man's Story.

"I am of an Italian family," said my friend, "but my father and my grandfather were both born in Germany; exceedingly good people in their way, but by no means very wealthy. My elder brother was being educated for a physician, and had just finished his course of

study, when my father, having given me as good an education as he could in Nuremberg, thought fit to send me to Hamburg, that I might pursue my studies there, and take advantage of any opportunity that might occur for advancing myself in life. My stock of all kinds was exceedingly small when I set out; my purse contained the closely-estimated expenses of my journey, and the allowance made for my maintenance during six months, which did not admit of the slightest idea of luxury of any kind. I was grateful, however, for what was given, for I knew that my father could afford no more, and I had no hope of another 'heller'* till my half year was out. I had my ordinary travelling dress, and my mother gave me six new shirts, which she had spun with her own hands; besides these, my portmanteau contained one complete black suit, two pair of shoes, and a pair of silver buckles, which my father took off his own feet, and bestowed upon me, with his benediction. My elder

* The smallest German coin, till a certain prince thought fit to coin half hellers.

brother always loved me, and was kind to me; and when my going was first talked of, he regretted deeply that he had nothing to give me; but my little preparations occupied a fortnight, and during that time good luck befriended him and me, and he treated and killed his first patient skilfully. Thus he obtained the means of making me a sumptuous present for my journey, which consisted of a straight-cut blue mantle, with a square collar. Let me dwell upon the mantle, for it is important. It was in the Nuremberg fashion, which had gone out of vogue over all the rest of Germany for at least thirty years, and when I first put it on, I felt very proud of it, thinking that I looked like one of the cavaliers in the great picture in the town-hall. However, there was not another mantle like it in all Germany, except in Nuremberg—sky-blue, falling three inches below the knee, with a square-cut collar. I will pass over my journey to Hamburg, till my arrival in a little common inn, in the old part of the town. Not having a pfenning to spare, I set out early the next morning to look out for a lodging, and

saw several that would have suited myself very well, but which did not suit my finances. At length, perceiving the wife of a grocer standing at a door, with a good-humoured countenance, in a narrow and dark street, containing some large, fine houses, which had seen the splendours of former times, I walked up to her and asked if she could recommend a lodging to a young man who was not over rich. After thinking for a moment, she pointed across the way, to a house with a decorated front, which had become as black as ink with age. The lower story was entirely occupied by an iron-warehouse; but she said that up above on the first floor I should find Widow Gentner, who let one room, and who had, she believed, no lodger at the time. I thanked her many times for her civility, and walking across the street to the point she indicated, I looked up at the cornices and other ornaments which were displayed upon the façade. Dirty they were, beyond all doubt. A pair of stone ladies with baskets in their hands, which had probably been once as white as snow, now displayed

long dripping lines of black upon their garments; their noses had disappeared, but the balls of the eyes were of the deepest brown, though about the centre appeared a white spot, which seemed to show the presence of cataract. The fruit in the baskets, however, consisted apparently of black cherries, and a dingy cornucopia, which stood by the side of each, vomited forth swarthy fruit and flowers of a very uninviting quality. I gazed in surprise and admiration, and asked myself if it ever would be my fate to live in so fine a mansion. Taking courage, however, I inquired at the ironmonger's which was the door of Widow Gentner, and of the three which opened into the lower part of the house, I was directed to the second. On the first floor I found a tidy little maid, who introduced me to the presence of her mistress, a quiet, dry old lady, who was seated in a room which had apparently formed part of a magnificent saloon—I say formed part, for it was evident that the size of the chamber had been much curtailed. On the ceiling, which was of the most magnificent

stucco work I ever saw, appeared various groups of angels and cherubs in high relief, as large as life, and seated amidst clouds and bunches of flowers as big as feather-beds. But that ceiling betrayed the dismemberment of the room ; for all along the side where ran the wall behind the good lady were seen angels' legs without the heads and bodies, baskets of flowers cut in two, and cherubs with not above one-half of those members even, which sculptors have left them. This was soon explained : the widow informed me that she had divided her chamber into three, of which she reserved one for herself, another for her little maid, and let the third, which had a staircase to itself opening from the street. She had done so with a good wall, she said, to support the plafond, so that if I wanted to see the room she had to let, I must go down again with her and mount the other stairs, as there was no door of communication. I admired her prudence, and accompanied her at once to a small room, arrived at by a narrow staircase with its own street-door ; and there I found on the ceiling

above my head the lost bodies and wings of the angels on the other side, besides a very solid pair of cherubims of my own. It contained a little, narrow bed, a table, a scanty proportion of chairs and other things necessary for the existence of a student; and though an unpleasant feeling of solitude crept over me as I thought of inhabiting an apartment so entirely cut off from all human proximity, yet, as the widow's rent was small, I closed the bargain at once, and soon was installed in my new abode. The good lady was very kind and attentive, and did all she could to make me comfortable, inquiring, amongst other things, what letters of introduction I had in Hamburg. I had but one which I considered of any value, which was addressed, with many of those flourishes which you know are common amongst us, to Mr. S., a famous man in his day, both as a philosopher and literary man, and was also a man of sense, of the world, and what is more than all, of a kind and benevolent heart. I went to deliver it that very day, and met with a most friendly reception from a good-looking

old gentleman, of perhaps sixty-three or four, who at once made me feel myself at home with him, treating me with that parental air which inspired both respect and confidence. He asked several questions about my journey, where I lodged, how I intended to employ my time, and last, what was the state of my finances. I told him all exactly as it was, and when I rose to depart, he laid his hand on my arm with the most benevolent air in the world, saying, ‘ You will dine with me to-morrow at twelve o’clock, and I shall expect to see you at dinner three days in the week as long as you stay. From eight to ten at night I am always at home, and whenever you have nothing else to do, come in and spend those hours with us.’ I will not pretend to say I was not quite well aware that the place thus granted me at his dinner-table was offered from a knowledge of the limited state of my finances ; but pride in my case was out of the question, and I was exceedingly grateful for the act of kindness, which saved me a considerable sum in my housekeeping, and enabled me to indulge in a

few little luxuries which I could not otherwise have commanded.

“ It was the autumn of the year when I arrived at Hamburg ; but the time passed very pleasantly. All the day I was engaged in my studies ; at twelve o'clock I dined, either at my own chamber or at worthy Mr. S.'s, and almost every evening was spent at his house, where he failed not to regale me, either with a cup of fine coffee, or sometimes, as a great treat, with a cup of tea, according to your English mode. In short, I became his nightly guest, and as the evenings grew dark and sometimes foggy, I bought a little lantern to light myself through the long and lonely streets which I had to pass from his house to my own. On these occasions, too, as the weather grew intensely cold, my blue cloak with the square collar proved a most serviceable friend, and every night at ten o'clock I might be seen in precisely the same attire; with my black suit, in great part covered by the azure mantle, and the small lantern in my hand, finding my way homeward to my solitary abode. Mr. S. lived in the fine new

part of the town, where he had a handsome house, with two maid-servants and his coachman, but the latter slept at the stables. I lived, as I have before said, in the old part of the town, well nigh a mile distant; thus, in coming and going, I got exercise at night, if I did not in the day, and I mark it particularly, that I used to enjoy my walk to his house and back, and used to look forward to it with pleasure during my hours of study, in order that you may see, that on the occasion of which I am about to speak, I was affected by no fantastical melancholy.

“At length, one night in the winter of 17—, after passing the evening at the house of Mr. S., where I had taken nothing but a cup of coffee and a slice of brown bread-and-butter, I took leave of my friend, put on my blue mantle with a square collar, lighted my lantern at the house-maid’s candle, and having safely shut the glass, set out on my walk home. It was about a quarter-past ten, and the night was clear and very dark; the sky, indeed, was full of stars, which looked peculiarly bright, as I

gazed up at them between the tall houses as if from the bottom of a well, and I felt a sort of exhilarating freshness in the air that raised my spirits rather than otherwise. I walked along to the end of the first street with a light step, turned into the second, and was just entering the third, when I saw a figure some thirty or forty paces before me, standing in a corner as if waiting for some one. Although the streets, in the good old days of Hamburg, were generally by that time of night quite deserted, yet there was nothing extraordinary in my meeting one or two persons as I went home, so that I took little or no notice of this figure, till I had advanced to within about twenty paces, when it turned itself full towards me, and at the same time the light of my lantern fell directly upon it. Guess my surprise, when I saw a being so exactly like myself, that I could have imagined I was looking in a glass. There were the black legs, the shoes and silver buckles, the blue mantle with the square-cut collar, and the little lantern with the handle at the back, held just as I held mine. I stopped suddenly, and

rubbed my eyes with my left hand; but the figure immediately turned round and walked away before me. At the same time my heart beat violently, and a sort of strange, dreamy sensation of horror came over me, like that which takes possession of one sometimes when labouring under the nightmare. An instant's reflection made me ashamed of what I felt, and saying to myself, ' I'll look a little closer at this gentleman,' I walked on, hurrying my pace. The figure, however, quickened its steps in the same proportion. I did not like to run, but I was always a quick walker, and I hastened as fast as ever I could; but it had no effect; the figure, without the least apparent effort, kept always at the same distance, and every moment I felt the sort of superstitious dread which had taken possession of me increasing, and struggling against the efforts of resolution. Resolution conquered, however; and determined to see who this was that was so like me, without showing him too plainly that I was chasing him, I stopped at a corner where a street wound round, entering again the one that I was pur-

suing at some distance, and then taking to my heels, I ran as hard as I could to get before my friend in the blue mantle. When I returned to the other street again, though I must have gained two or three minutes at least, instead of seeing the figure coming from the side where I had left it, there it was, walking on deliberately in the direction I usually followed towards my own house. We were now within three streets of Widow Gentner's, and though they were all of them narrow enough, I generally took those which were most open. There was a lane, however, to the left, which, passing by the grocer's I have mentioned, cut off at least a quarter of the way, and as I was now overpowered by feelings I cannot describe, I resolved to take the shortest path, and run as hard as I could, in order to get home, and shut myself in before the figure in the blue mantle reached the spot. Off I set, then, down the narrow lane like lightning, but when I came to the grocer's corner, my horror was complete, on beholding the same figure walking along past the closed windows of the iron-shop, and

I stopped, with my heart beating as if it would have burst through my ribs. With eyes almost starting from my head, and the light of the lantern turned full upon it, I gazed at its proceedings, when behold, it walked quietly up to my door, stopped, turned round towards the house, put the right-hand in its pocket, and seemed feeling for my key. The key was produced, and stooping down, just as I should have done, after a little searching for the keyhole, the door was opened, the figure went in, and instantly the door closed again.

“ If you had given me the empire of a world, I could not have made up my mind to go in after it, and setting off more like a madman than anything else, I returned to the house of Mr. S., with the intention of telling him what had occurred. The bell was answered quickly enough by the housemaid, who gazed at my wild and scared appearance with some surprise. She told me, however, that the old gentleman had gone to bed, and that she could not think of waking him on any account; and, resolved not to go home, and yet not liking to walk the

streets of Hamburg all night, I persuaded her, with some difficulty, to let me sit in the saloon till I could speak with Mr. S. in the morning. I will not detain you by describing how I passed the night; but when my friend came down the next day, I related to him all that occurred, with many excuses for the liberty I had taken. He listened gravely, and his first question naturally was, if I were quite sure I had gone straight homeward, without entering any of those places where strong drinks were sold. I assured him most solemnly that the only thing that had entered my lips that night was the cup of coffee which I had taken at his house.

“ ‘The maid can tell you,’ I said, ‘that I had not been absent more than three quarters of an hour when I returned.’

“ ‘Well, my young friend,’ he replied, ‘I believe you fully; very strange things occasionally happen to us in life; and this seems one. However, we will have some breakfast, and then go and inquire into it.’

“ After breakfast, we set out, and walked to my house, I pointing out by the way all the

different spots connected with my tale. When we reached the gloomy old mansion, with its decorated front, I was going direct to my own door, but Mr. S. said, 'Stay, we will first talk to your landlady for a minute.' And we accordingly walked up to the rooms of Widow Gentner by the other door and the other staircase. The widow was very proud of the visit of so distinguished a person in the town as Mr. S., and answered his questions with due respect. The first was a very common one in that part of Germany—namely, whether she had slept well that night. She assured him she had, perfectly well; and he then proceeded with a somewhat impressive air, to inquire if nothing had occurred to disturb her. She then suddenly seemed to recollect herself, and answered, 'Now you mention it, I recollect I was awoke about eleven o'clock, I think, by a noise on the other side of the wall; but thinking that Mr. Z. had thrown over his table, or something of that kind, I turned on the other side, and went to sleep again.'

"No further information being to be obtained

we descended to the street, and taking out my keys, I opened the door, and we went in. My heart beat a little as we mounted the stairs; but resolving not to show any want of courage, I boldly unlocked the room-door, and threw it open. The sight that presented itself made me pause on the threshold, for there on my bed, where I should have been lying at the very moment of its fall, was the whole ceiling of that part of the room, angels' heads, and cherubim's wings, flower-baskets, and everything; and so great was the weight and the force with which it had come down, that it had broken the solid bedstead underneath it. As I do not suppose my head is formed of much more strong materials, it is probable that it would have been cracked as well as the bed, and I heartily thank God for my preservation! All my good old friend ventured to say, however, was, 'A most fortunate escape! Had you slept here last night, you would have been killed to a certainty.' Though a doctor of philosophy, he did not risk any speculations upon the strange apparition which I had beheld the

night before; but invited me to take up my abode in his house till my room could be put in order, never afterwards mentioning the appearance of my double; and I have only to add that from that time to this, now between fifty and sixty years, I have never seen myself again, except in a looking-glass."

"Such," continued Beauchamp, "is the story of my German friend, exactly as he told it to me. I must leave you to judge of it as you will, for unless you could see the old man, and know his perfect simplicity of character, and quiet matter-of-fact temper of mind, you could not take the same view of his history that I do."

"In short, Mr. Beauchamp, you are a believer in ghosts," said Sir John Slingsby, laughing; "well, for my part, I never saw any better spirit than a bottle of brandy, and hope never to see a worse."

"Take care you don't find yourself mistaken, Sir John," answered Dr. Miles, "for although it is rather difficult to meet with good spirits, the bad ones are much more easily conjured up."

"I am not afraid, doctor," answered Sir John, "and mind, I have only had three or four glasses of wine, so mine is not Dutch courage now; but let us talk of something else than ghosts and such things, or we shall all have the blue devils before we've done—a capital story, nevertheless, Beauchamp; but this is a good story, too, doctor, about my sister being stopped on the king's highway. Has she told you about it?"

Dr. Miles merely nodded his head, and Sir John went on.

"I can't make out the game of that old rascal Wittingham, who seems devilish unwilling to catch the thieves, and had taken himself out of the way when Ned Hayward and I called this morning. The old linen-drapering scamp shall find that he can't treat Jack Slingsby in this way."

"Indeed, my dear brother, I wish you would let the matter rest," said Mrs. Clifford; "no harm was done, except frightening me very foolishly, and to pursue it further may, perhaps, lead to disagreeable consequences. The letter

written beforehand, to bring me over by a report of your illness, shows that this was no ordinary affair."

"A fig for the consequences," cried Sir John Slingsby; "if it were to set half the town on fire, I would go on with it. Why, my dear Harriet, am not I a magistrate, one of his majesty's justices of the peace for the county of ——? Such a conscientious woman as you are, would never have me neglect my solemn duties." And Sir John chuckled with a low merry laugh, at the new view he chose to take of his responsibilities.

In such conversation the dinner went on to its close, the subjects changing rapidly, for the worthy baronet was not one to adhere tenaciously to any particular line of thought, and Mrs. Clifford, but more particularly still her daughter, being anxious to quit the topic just started as soon as possible. Miss Clifford, indeed, seemed so much agitated and embarrassed, whilst the adventures of the preceding night were under discussion, that Ned Hayward, who was the kindest-hearted man alive,

and not without tact, especially where women were concerned, came zealously to her relief, and engaged her in low and earnest conversation.

It was one of those cases in which two people, without well knowing what they are about, go on puzzling each other, though both may be as frank as day. They talked of every simple subject which all the world might have heard discussed—music, painting, poetry; but yet the whole was carried on in so low a tone that, to any one that did not know them, it would have appeared that they were making love. Miss Clifford was troubled, perplexed, to make out her companion's character, for she certainly expected nothing from a man familiarly called Ned Hayward, and more especially from a particular friend of her uncle's, but a gay, rattling, good-humoured scapegrace, at the best; yet in order to gain her full attention, and withdraw her thoughts from a subject which he saw annoyed her, Captain Hayward put off for the time his usual careless, rapid manner, and spoke with so much feeling and good

taste, and what is more, good sense also, upon all the many topics upon which their conversation ran—he showed her that he had read so much, and thought so much, and felt so much, that she became convinced before he had done of the complete fallacy of all her preconceived notions of his disposition. Such a change of opinion is always very favourable to a man with a woman; for they are such generous creatures, those women, that if they find they have done one injustice, they are sure to go to the opposite extreme, and give us credit for more than is our due.

Ned Hayward's puzzle was of a different kind, but it proceeded from the same source—namely, an erroneous preconception. He saw that Mary Clifford was embarrassed whenever the subject of the attack upon their carriage was mentioned, that she changed colour, not from red to white, as would have been the case had terror had aught to do with it, but from white to red, which is generally a change produced by other emotions. He therefore set it down as a certain fact, that the fair lady's

heart was a little engaged in the transaction; and yet, as they went on talking in that same low voice, she twice returned to the subject herself, not without some degree of embarrassment, it is true, but still as if she wished to say more, and Ned Hayward thought, with some degree of pique, "Well, my pretty friend, I am not quite old enough to be made a confidant of yet."

At length, just as the dessert was being put upon the table, troublesome Sir John Slingsby harked back upon the subject, asking Mr. Beauchamp if he thought he could swear to any of the persons concerned; and taking advantage of a quick and somewhat loud conversation which went on between those two gentlemen and Dr. Miles, Miss Clifford suddenly broke through what she was talking of with her companion on the right, and said, earnestly, but still almost in a whisper, "Captain Hayward, you rendered me a very great service last night, for which I shall ever feel grateful, and it will add immensely to the favour, if you can prevent my uncle from pur-

suings the matter in the manner he seems inclined to do. Particular circumstances, which I may some time have an opportunity of explaining, would render it most painful to me to have the scandalous outrage which was committed upon us last night dragged into a court of justice; indeed, I think it would half kill me, especially if I had to give evidence, as I suppose would be the case."

"I will do my best," answered Ned Hayward, "but you must not be angry or surprised at any means I may take for that purpose. I could act better, indeed, if I knew the circumstances."

"All I can say at present," answered the young lady, in a low tone, "is, that this was not a case of robbery, as you all seem to suppose."

The colour mounted into her cheek as she spoke, and she added, quickly, "I cannot reproach myself with anything in the affair, Captain Hayward, although I have scrutinized my own conduct severely; but yet at the same time, even to have my name talked of in connexion with such a proceeding, and with such—

such a person, would distress me more than I can describe. I will say more another time."

"In the meanwhile, I will do my best," replied the other; and instantly commenced a jesting attack upon Sir John Slingsby, which at once drew the baronet away from the subject. They had not got farther, however, than a sharp shot and a rejoinder, when the roll of wheels was heard driving up to the door, and a minute or two after, one of the servants entered, announcing that Mr. Wittingham was in the library.

"Let him stay—let him stay!" said Sir John Slingsby; "he'll have an opportunity there of improving his mind. What, what do you say?" he continued, as the man whispered something over his shoulder; "we've neither secrets of state nor high treason here,—speak out."

"Please you, Sir John, two of Mr. Wittingham's men have brought up Stephen Gimlet, whom they call Wolf, in custody. I have kept him in the hall."

"Hang it!" cried Ned Hayward, "my little

boy's father. I hope he has not been doing any serious mischief!"

"I don't think it—I don't think it," said Dr. Miles, eagerly; "the man has a heart and a conscience—a little warped, it is true, but still sound—sound, I think—I will go and speak to him."

"Hang him, he steals my pheasants!" exclaimed Sir John Slingsby.

"Then why don't you put him to keep them, colonel?" asked Ned Hayward. "He would make a capital keeper, I am sure. Set a thief to catch a thief, Sir John."

"Not a bad idea, Ned," answered the baronet. "Stay, stay, doctor, he's not condemned yet, and so does not want the parson. We had better talk to old Wittingham first. We'll have him in and fuddle him. Give my compliments to Mr. Wittingham, Matthews, and beg him to walk in. You need not go, Harriet. He's quite a lady's man."

But Mrs. Clifford rose, not at all anxious to witness the process of fuddling a magistrate, and withdrew with her daughter and her niece.

CHAPTER XII.

“AH! Wittingham! Wittingham!” cried the baronet, stretching forth his hand, without rising, as the servant introduced the worthy magistrate, “is that you, my old buck? If you haven’t come in pudding-time, you have come in wine-time, and will get what so few men get in life—your dessert. Sit down and pledge me, old fellow. What shall it be in? Here’s port that was bottled when I came of age, so you may judge that it is good old stuff! Madeira that has made more voyages than Cook, Comet Claret of 1811, and a bottle of Burgundy that smells under my nose like oil of violets.”

"Why, Sir John," replied Mr. Wittingham, taking the seat just left vacant by Mrs. Clifford, and very well pleased with so familiar a reception, when he expected quite the reverse ; for to say the truth, although some circumstances had happened to make him resolve upon taking the bull by the horns, and visiting the old lion of Tarningham Park in his den, it was nevertheless with great pain and difficulty that he had screwed his courage to the sticking-point,—“why, Sir John, I come upon business, and it is better to transact affairs of importance with a clear head.”

“Pooh, nonsense !” exclaimed the baronet ; “no man ever did business well without being half drunk. Look at my old friend Pitt, poor fellow ! and Charley Fox, too, Sir William Scott, and Dundas, and all of them ; not a set of jollier toppers in the world than they were, and are still—what are left of them. Well, here’s a health to the living, and peace to the dead !—Burgundy, eh ?” and he filled a glass for Mr. Wittingham to the brim.

The worthy magistrate took it, and drinking

Sir John Slingsby's toast, was about to proceed to business, when the baronet again interrupted him, saying, "Let me introduce you to my friends, Wittingham; there's no fun in drinking with men you don't know. With Dr. Miles you are acquainted: this is my friend, Mr. Beauchamp, and this my friend, Captain Hayward. Gentlemen both, know, esteem, and admire Henry Wittingham, Esq., one of the ornaments of the bench of the county of —, one of the trustees of the turnpike roads, a very active magistrate, and a very honest man. Sink the shop, Witty," he continued, in a friendly whisper to his companion; for Sir John seldom, if ever, allowed Mr. Wittingham to escape without some allusion to his previous occupations, which naturally made that gentleman hate him mortally. "But before we have another glass, my good friend, I must make you acquainted with these gentlemen's high qualities," proceeded the baronet. "Here's Ned Hayward, the most deadly shot in Europe, whether with pistol, rifle, or fowling-piece, nothing escapes him, from the human form divine

down to a cock-sparrow. The best angler in England, too; would throw a fly into a tea-spoon at fifty yards distance. He has come down for an interminable number of months, to catch my trout, kill my game, and drink my Claret. Then, there is my friend Mr. Beauchamp,—more sentimentally given, a very learned man and profound, loves poetry and solitary walks, and is somewhat for musing melancholy made; but is a good hand at a trigger, too, I can tell you—a light finger, and a steady aim; ha! Beauchamp?” and the baronet winked his eye and laughed.

Beauchamp smiled good-humouredly, and in order to change the course of the conversation, which was not exactly what suited him, he said that he had the pleasure of a slight acquaintance with Mr. Wittingham.

Ned Hayward, however, somewhat to Beauchamp's surprise, seemed determined to encourage their host in his light and rattling talk; and taking the latter up where Sir John had left it, he said, “Oh dear, yes, I dare say we shall have capital sport down here. The old

work of the 40th, Sir John; clearing all the fences, galloping over all the turnips, riding down the young wheat, forgetting the limits of the manor, letting the beasts out of the pound, making a collection of knockers and bell-pulls, fighting the young men, and making love to the young women—Mr. Wittingham, the wine stands with you.”

Mr. Wittingham filled his glass, and drank, saying, with a grave and somewhat alarmed air, “I don’t think that would exactly do in this county, sir; the magistrates are rather strict here.”

“The devil they are!” said Ned Hayward, with a good deal of emphasis, the meaning of which Mr. Wittingham could not well help understanding; but the next moment the young gentleman went on: “but who cares a pin for magistrates, Mr. Wittingham? They’re nothing but a parcel of old women.”

“Halo, halo, Ned!” cried Sir John, “you forget in whose presence you are speaking; “reverencet he bench, young man—reverence the bench; and if you can’t do that, reverence the colonel.”

"Oh, you're a great exception to the general rule," replied Captain Hayward; "but what I say is true, nevertheless; and as I like to define my positions, I will give you a lexicographical description of the magistrates. They should be called in any dictionary, a body of men selected from the most ignorant of the people, for the mal-administration of good laws."

"Bravo, bravo!" shouted Sir John Slingsby, roaring with laughter; and even Dr. Miles nodded his head, with a grave smile, saying, "Too just a definition, indeed."

Mr. Wittingham looked confounded, but Sir John passed him the bottle, and for relief he again filled his glass and emptied it. Now, to men not quite sure of their position, there is nothing so completely overpowering as jest and merriment with a dash of sarcasm. In grave argument, where they have their own vanity for their backer, they will always venture to meet men both of superior abilities and superior station, whether in so doing they expose themselves or not; for in that case their

notions are generally formed beforehand, and they are fully convinced that those notions are just; but in a combat of the wit, it requires to be a very ready man, and also to have all those habits of society which enable one to make the reply tart enough, with every semblance of courtesy. On the bench and in the justice-room Mr. Wittingham would often venture to spar with Sir John Slingsby, and sometimes with a good deal of success; for although the baronet had much greater natural abilities and information, yet he had so many foibles and failings, and occasionally such a degree of perversity, that from time to time his adversary would get hold of a weak point, and drive him into a corner. It always ended, however, by Sir John coming off triumphant; for when he found that argument failed him he had recourse to ridicule, and in two minutes would utterly confound his antagonist, and overwhelm him amidst peals of laughter.

In the present instance Mr. Wittingham found that Sir John was in one of his jocular moods, and scarcely dared to say a word, lest

he should bring some of his hard jests upon his head, especially when the baronet had the strong support which Ned Hayward seemed capable of giving. He was therefore anxious to proceed to the business that brought him as speedily as possible ; and giving up the defence of the magistracy after a momentary pause, he said, " Really, Sir John, as I must get home soon——"

" Not till you have finished your bottle, man," cried Sir John Slingsby, pushing the Burgundy to him ; " whoever comes to see me after dinner, must fight me or drink a bottle with me ; so here's to your health, Witty—a bumper, a bumper, and no heel-taps."

Now the glasses at Sir John Slingsby's table might well be called wine-glasses, for they seldom had any other liquor in them ; but at the same time, in size they were not much less than those vessels which are named tumblers, I suppose from their being less given to tumbling than any other sort of glass. Mr. Wittingham had drank three already, besides the moderate portion which he had taken at

his own dinner; but in order to get rid of the subject, he swallowed another of strong Burgundy, and then commenced again, saying, "Really, Sir John, we must go to business. We can sip your good wine while we are talking the affair over."

"Sip it!" exclaimed his host, "whoever heard of a man sipping such stuff as this? Nobody ever sips his wine but some lackadaisical, love-lorn swain, with a piece of Cheshire cheese before him, making verses all the time upon pouting lips and rounded hips, and sparkling eyes and fragrant sighs, and pearly teeth and balmy breath, and slender nose and cheek that glows, and all the O's! and all the I's! that ever were twisted into bad metre and bad sense; or else the reformed toper, who is afraid of exceeding the stint that his doctors have allowed him, and lingers out every drop with the memory of many a past carouse before his eyes. No, no, such wine as this is made to be swallowed at a mouthful, washing the lips with a flood of enjoyment, stimulating the tongue, spreading a glow over

the palate, and cooling the tonsils and the throat only to inflame them again with fresh appetite for the following glass—sip it! why hang it, Wittingham, it is to insult a good bottle of wine, and I trust that you may be shot dead by a Champagne cork to teach you better manners.”

“Well, then,” cried Mr. Wittingham, stimulated to *repartee* by impatience, “I will say, Sir John, that we can swill your wine while we are talking of business.”

“Ay, that’s something like,” cried Sir John Slingsby, not at all discomposed, “you shall swill the wine, and I will drink it: that will suit us both. Beauchamp we will let off, because he’s puny, and Doctor Miles because he’s reverend. Ned Hayward will do us justice, glass for glass, I’ll answer for it. So another bumper, and then to business; but first we’ll have lights, your worship, for it’s growing dusky,” and Sir John rose to ring the bell.

Scarcely, however, had he quitted his seat, when there was heard a loud report. One of the panes of glass in the window flew in shining

splinters into the room, and a ball whistling through, passed close to the head of Mr. Wittingham, knocked off his wig, and lodged in the eye of a Cupid who was playing with his mother in a large picture on the other side of the room.

“Zounds!” cried Sir John Slingsby.

END OF VOL. I.



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